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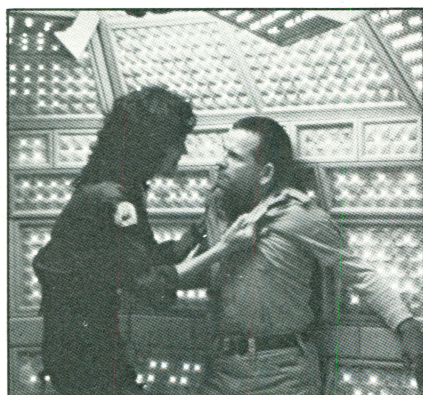
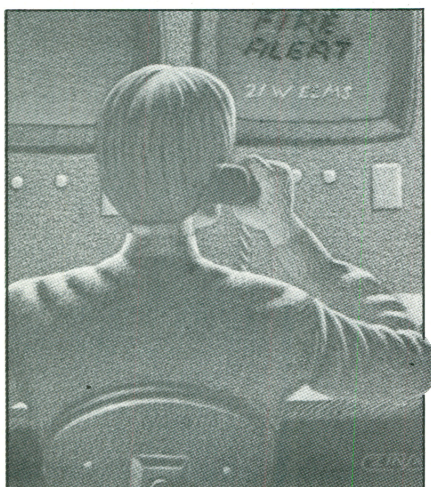


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COVER PHOTO:
Boston Globe
Color Retouching:
Michael Krueger

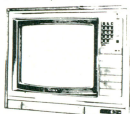
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VIDEO ACTION: June, 1981, Vol. 1 No. 7. Published monthly by VIDEO ACTION, INC., 21 W. Elm St., Chicago, Ill. 60610. Controlled circulation postage paid at Denver, Colo. Postmaster send form 3579 to VIDEO ACTION magazine, P.O. Box 255, Mount Morris, Ill. 61054. Subscriptions: in the U.S. \$17.00 per year; Canadian, \$19.00 per year; foreign, \$25.00 per year. Printed in the USA.

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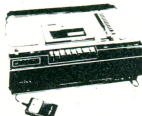
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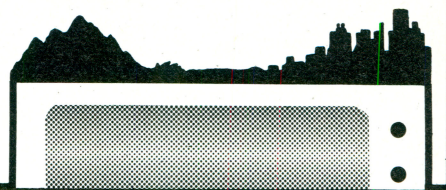
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8:00 CENTRAL TIME



Once again, the National Parent-Teacher Association has decided to tell us what to think. Some 3,000 of their members have taken upon themselves the task of informing the rest of America's quarter-billion people what is the worst network television. The PTA has taken the additional step of informing those who share their beliefs how they can stop the rest of the nation from enjoying those programs the 3,000 self-appointed censors found to their dislike.

By suggesting—or implying—to its six million plus members to boycott the advertisers of these programs, the PTA is dictating how we should spend our free time. History has shown us that a television advertiser is extremely susceptible to organized pressure groups—if one percent of the PTA's national membership takes pen in hand and threatens a boycott of any program's sponsor, that advertiser is likely to withdraw support of the show. If the network cannot find another sponsor, the show will be cancelled.

Unlikely? Remember *Red Channels*—the organized boycott of television advertisers because one member of a show once talked to a suspected Communist? Shows were cancelled because of that effort: careers, and even lives, were lost. Remember *Bridget Loves Bernie*? That harmless situation comedy about inter-faith love—a common enough occurrence—was in the top 10, yet after an organized letter writing campaign conducted by some religious groups, even that top-ranked television show disappeared from the ether.

In attempting to rationalize its censorship activities, the Parent-Teacher Association raises that ever-popular banner "We Are Doing It For The Children!" Educators, philosophers, and great thinkers advise against letting children watch shows their parents do not like. There is no doubt all too many parents are allowing their children to watch

whatever they please: the PTA's time, energies, and money could be better spent instructing parents how to put a lock on the television set, how to take the tube out of their childrens' bedrooms, and how to sit down and talk with their kids.

If the PTA's fantasies come true and all the "offensive" programs were banished from the airwaves and shows like *The Waltons* and *Little House on the Prairie* were the rule, we would have a situation that is far, far more dangerous to children. If all the shows were acceptable for the younger portion of the audience, then the PTA and the nation's parents would have no qualms about letting their kids watch the tube at any time, on any station.

The problem is, television is addictive. If you exercise no control over the set, our kids will watch it all the time. Even if the programming is inoffensive or even highly educational, *Little House on the Prairie* and its clones are no substitute for direct human experience—going out and playing with friends, reading books and discussing them with teachers and peers, talking with other members of the family and the like.

As *Video Action* readers are well aware, we have entered a world where a viewer can exercise total control of his or her television entertainment and get any type of program at the time it is wanted.

However, viewers always have had two very important ways to protect themselves from programming they personally find offensive: they can change the channel, or they can turn the damn thing off.

But the Parent-Teacher Association, by threatening boycotts, are taking upon themselves a right even the United States Congress does not have: they are preventing at least 20 million Americans from watching some of their favorite television shows.

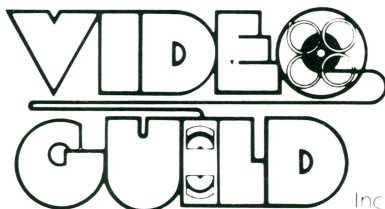
—Mike Gold,
Editor

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CONFUSING BUT WORTHWHILE

"Saving Video Tape—How to Use Your VCR Tape Counter" (*Video Action*, April 1981) was one of the most informative—not to mention confusing—articles you people have run. Spending as I do hundreds of dollars a year on tape, I'm glad to see that someone has taken the time out to figure how we can get the fullest possible use out of every available inch. And "vidgits" is a word that deserves to be in the VCR-owners' lexicon. I love it.

What confused me was all of E.G. Sunden's mathamatics that went with the article. Still, it was worth all the time I spent with my calculator figuring out just what the hell he was talking about.

R. Markowitz
Bronx, NY

MORE KIDEO COMMENTS

Action for Children's Television (ACT) sometimes gets accused of talking out of both sides of its mouth. How can we work so hard to increase the availability of programming designed for children, we are asked, when, at the same time, we worry about the fact that children are watching over 30 hours of television a week? If we think children are watching much too much television (and they are), why are we encouraging broadcasters, cable

operators, and home video companies to offer more children's programming?

The answer is, because the more television programming that is aired for children, the greater the diversity of programs they will have to choose from. Diversity is the greatest resource that television has to offer children, a diversity of faces, places, ideas, and values that can broaden their horizons as no other educational force can.

Marilyn Ferdinand's series of articles on children's television (*Video Action*; January-March 1981) illustrates the sad lack of diversity which characterizes the programming children are provided by broadcast television today. A slapstick animated chase cartoon may be perfectly acceptable children's fare. But a whole season of Saturday mornings and weekday afternoons full of slapstick animated chase cartoons, on channel after channel, is a waste of airtime. Children deserve—they need—a choice of programming. There is room on children's television for *Sesame Street* and *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, with their very different pacing and appeal, and for silly cartoons and monster movies. There is also room for much, much more: where is it? With some glittering exceptions, broadcast television offers children a diet of unrelenting sameness, because sameness is safe. Ms. Ferdinand points out, very rightfully, that commercial broadcasters are looking

for a "glue factor." Once they think they've found a formula that will keep kids glued to the set, they are afraid to vary it for fear of losing or even slightly reducing their market.

Cable television, on the other hand, can afford to offer children a diversity of programs. And that diversity can be the result of real public input, at the franchising table, behind the camera, or on the set. Cable television offers children the opportunity to make their own programs, so that one of their many viewing options can be a program that they have helped to create.

To those who can afford the necessary equipment, the home video industry offers an even greater variety of programming to choose from, and Ms. Ferdinand's list of films, cassettes, and discs illustrates just how attractive those choices can be. From the Brothers Grimm to Maurice Sendak, from sex education to scientific experiments, the alternate technologies can offer a truly balanced TV diet.

Ferdinand is right: for better or for worse, television has become an inseparable part of the Great American Way. Hard as it may be for some people to swallow, *Dallas*, with its viewership of many millions, is a new American myth in the making.

Ms. Ferdinand is right again when she writes that freedom of speech is also an integral part of the American consciousness. But I do not agree with her when she says that "it may become necessary . . . to reevaluate the sanctity of television program content." There are groups of people in this country who are trying to do exactly that, in the name of American children, and their goals threaten children with something much more frightening and destructive than repetitive chase cartoons. In the name of protecting children, they threaten to narrow our freedom of choice and information.

Children and their parents not only deserve a diversity of children's programming: they have a right to demand it of broadcasters, as a public service, and expect it of the cable companies that serve their communities. ACT will continue to work for a broadening, not a narrowing, of children's choices. And we will continue to work for a greater variety of program content in a way that does not jeopardize the legitimate sanctity of free speech.

Peggy Charren
President,
Action for Children's Television

I LIKE M*A*S*H— AND HAWKEYE TOO!

I just finished reading your article about M*A*S*H in the March issue of *Video Action* and one part in it really disturbed me. You said that Hawkeye Pierce should be shipped stateside. Without him M*A*S*H would be just another show. Alda is the heart of the show, he stars in it, writes, directs it, and is a creative consultant. When you single out Alan Alda, you should also remember Jamie Farr, Loretta Switt, and William Christopher who have been on the show just as long. Shelley Hamersma
Wyckoff, N.J.



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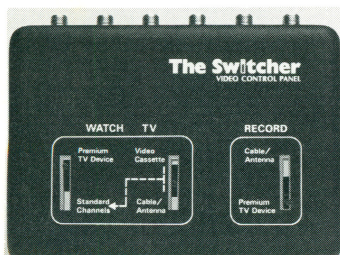
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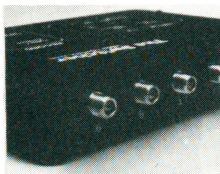


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cables that otherwise clutter up your living room when you have a video recorder.

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DEPT. VA

The Greatest Television Villain?

By Larry Charet

Everybody loves a villain. Who are the two most popular characters in American movies and television? Darth Vader and J.R. Ewing. Like I said, everybody loves a villain.

And of all the arch-enemies to hit the airwaves during the decade past, the archest of enemies was Krigh Dhiegh, beyond a doubt. Better known as Wo Fat, Krigh Dhiegh was the baddie who constantly plagued *Hawaii Five-O*'s top cop, Steve McGarrett.

Dhiegh, who had a short-lived detective series of his own called *Khan*, first appeared as the oriental menace in *Five-O*'s pilot film, aired in September 1968. Eleven episodes and 12 years later, he was captured and jailed in "Woe To Wo Fat," the final show of the series. No recurring heavy in any television series has had that degree of durability.

Of course, Wo Fat was not without his changes. In his early appearances, it was easy—and convenient—to depict Wo as the dreaded Red Chinese menace. After President Nixon went to China and we traded ping pong paddles, Red Chinese villains disappeared from the small screen. Since Wo was too popular to vanish, he metamorphosized into a Fu Manchu type, no longer taking orders from Peking. Working on his own now, Wo was usually accompanied by his treacherous assistant, Chong, played by Robert Nelson.

Five-O creator Leonard Freeman conceived the role of Wo Fat. When Freeman died in the mid-1970s, series star Jack Lord took control and it was he who suggested the final episode with the ultimate Wo Fat-McGarrett confrontation. Lord left the door open for an occasional television "movie" sequel, so there is always the chance that Wo Fat could one day return.

For the time being, we will have to be content with the syndicated reruns of *Five-O*, beginning this fall.

And while you are waiting, mull

over this guide to Wo Fat episodes:

1. "Hawaii Five-O" aired September 20, 1968; written and directed by Leonard Freeman. The death of a secret agent leads McGarrett to Wo Fat's "Brain-Drain" machine. Guest stars Andrew Duggan, Nancy Kwan, and Leslie Nielsen. In this episode, Tom O'Kelly appeared as Danny Williams, Lew Ayers as the Governor, and James Gregory as CIA agent Jonathan Kaye, a recurring character in the Wo Fat episodes.

2. "40 Feet High and It Kills" aired October 8, 1969; written by Robert C. Dennis and Edward J. Lasko. Wo Fat kidnaps a scientist engaged in a genetic breakthrough that could develop a race of supermen. Guest stars Will Geer and Sabrina Scharf.

3. "A Bullet for McGarrett" aired October 29, 1969; written by Jay Roberts and Anthony Lawrence. Wo Fat uses a university professor who can hypnotically turn people into killers. Guest stars Eric Braden, Marian McAndrews, and Sheila Larken.

4. "... And A Time To Die" aired September 16, 1970; written by Ken Pettus and directed by Charles Dubin. Wo is trying to kill a U.S.

intelligence agent in Hawaii. Guest stars Gerald S. O'Loughlin and Donald Moffatt.

5. "F.O.B. Honolulu" aired in two parts—January 27 and February 3, 1971; written by Jerry Ludwig and Eric Bercovici, and directed by Michael O'Herlihy. Five-O, Russian agents, and Wo Fat are all after a set of perfect counterfeit U.S. currency plates. Guest stars Roger C. Carmel, Sabrina Scharf, John McMartin, Monte Landis, and Joe Sirola as Jonathan Kaye.

6. "The 90 Second War" aired in two parts—January 11 and 18, 1972; written by John D.F. Black and Leonard Freeman, and directed by Bob Sweeney. In his most elaborate scheme, Wo tries to blackout the U.S. missile defense system in Hawaii. Guest stars Roger C. Carmel, Dana Wynter, Donald Pleasence, and Tim O'Conner as Jonathan Kaye.

7. "The Jinn Who Clears The Way" aired October 10, 1972; written by John D.F. Black and directed by Harry Falk. Wo steals an ICBM guidance system. This time around, McGarrett snares Wo but is forced to give him up when the CIA trades the master villain for a captured U.S. pilot. Guest stars Soon Taik Oh, Daniel Kamekona, and Joe Sirola as Jonathan Kaye.

8. "Presenting in the Center Ring... Murder" aired December 10, 1974; written by Jerome Coopersmith and directed by Charles Dubin. Working on his own, Wo plans to kill a Chinese peace emissary visiting Hawaii and regain power in China. Guest stars James Hong, Richard Vniguez, Corey Rand, and this time, Bill Edwards as Jonathan Kaye.

9. "Murder—Eyes Only" aired as a two-hour episode September 12, 1975; written by Orville Hampton and Jerome Coopersmith, and directed by Michael O'Herlihy. Wo is behind a security leak at a U.S. Navy base. Guest stars Harry Guardino, David Birney, Donna Mills, Lloyd Bochner, and Lyle Bettger.

After President Nixon went to China and we traded ping pong paddles, Red Chinese villains disappeared from the small screen and HAWAII FIVE-O's Wo Fat metamorphosized into a Fu Manchu type.

10. "Nine Dragons" aired as a two-hour episode September 30, 1976; written by Jerome Coopersmith and directed by Michael O'Herlihy. In Hong Kong, Wo kidnaps McGarrett and brainwashes him into helping take control of China. Guest stars Dina Merrill, Michael Anderson Jr., and David Tomlinson. Filmed on location in Hong Kong.

11. "Woe To Wo Fat" aired April 5, 1980; written by Frank Telford and directed by Barry Crane. Wo kidnaps a group of scientists who can build a deadly missile system. McGarrett impersonates one of the group and is taken to Wo's island base where he ultimately triumphs over his long-time nemesis. Guest stars Patricia Crowley, Lyle Bettger, Vito Scotti, Terrance Knapp, Wayne Lord, and Henry Nidzielski. The last episode of *Hawaii Five-O*.

* * *

And now on to this month's *Vintage Video Action* mailbag.

Q. I read with interest the first two *Vintage Video Action* columns and I enjoyed them thoroughly. I assume you noted in a recent issue of *Variety* that a West Coast production outfit (Sunrise Productions) has obtained the rights to *Mr. Peepers*, the early 1950s sitcom with Wally Cox and Tony Randall. They are in the process of transferring 100 out of the 130 shows from kinescope to videotape for future syndication. Alex McNeil, author, *Total Television*.

A. It will be very interesting indeed to see how many stations will buy such an old series as *Mr. Peepers*. I'd like to thank Alex and the others who have sent me information about old shows on in their areas and I will be including them in future installments of *TV Obscura*.

Q. Tell me everything there is to know about the series *My Partner, The Ghost*, please. Donna Martin, West Springfield, MA

A. This series (originally titled *Randall and Hodkirk, Deceased*) starred Mike Pratt as private eye Jeff Randall and Kenneth Cope as his partner Marty Hodkirk. When Marty is killed while on a case, he finds his time is not really up, so he comes back as a ghost whom only Randall can see (as with *Topper* and the original *Smothers Brothers Show*). Annette Andre co-starred as Marty's wife Jeannie. There were 26 one-hour episodes filmed and the series is currently being offered for syndication. To the best of my knowledge, it has not been picked up by any local outlet.

There are no fan clubs that I know about associated with the series—but if any interested reader would like to start one, let me know and I'll forward your letter to Donna. Photos of the principal players can be found in volume two of Vincent Terrace's *Complete Encyclopedia Of Television Programs, 1947-1979*.

Q. Marie Buren, of Deer Park, Texas is interested in two series, *The Magician* and *Dark Shadows*.

A. Bill Bixby's *The Magician* series ran for one season on NBC in 1973-1974. Twenty-one hour shows were filmed; it is not being offered in syndication. The pilot originally aired March 17, 1973 as a television movie—you might want to keep your eye out for it on your local movie programs.

Dark Shadows, the daytime ABC serial from the 1960s, has over 1,000 episodes currently available for syndication but nobody is buying. It was on a number of stations five years ago but it didn't do very well—the Michigan station I listed several months back is no longer running the soaper. There has been some talk about running the show on cable television. The star, Jonathan Frid, has more-or-less faded into obscurity, but two co-stars, David Selby and Kate Jackson, have gone on to interesting careers. Ms. Jackson, you might recall, at one time starred in a formerly popular series called *Charlie's Angels*. She played the intelligent one.

TV Obscura

Continuing our list of syndicated shows showing up in a limited number of markets:

Peyton Place: Channel 22
Pittsburg, PA

Roy Rogers: Channel 9
Cincinnati, OH

Run For Your Life: Channel 13
Des Moines, IA

Bachelor Father: Channel 51
Reading, PA

Thunderbirds: Channel 25
Boston, MA

* * *

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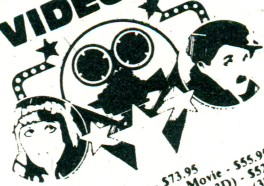
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home Computers

You're Among Friends . . .

By Bob Soron

Okay: you've learned what the words mean. You've bought a stack of books and magazines that will keep you in the house for months. And it is not enough. You've got questions. And you do not know where to go for the answers.

Fortunately, relief is available in person in many areas of the country, and by mail in any area. It is that wonderful creation, the *computer club*.

As the saying goes, computer clubs come in all shapes and sizes. The largest—the Boston Computer Society—just hit 1500 members; the smallest tend to have a dozen or so. They can be devoted to computers in general, to a specific computer, a language, or even an application (particularly computers in education or business). What do these clubs do?

Computer clubs exist for one reason: to help demystify the equipment. Whether it is a person who has heard about computers and wants to learn a little more, or a person who wants to assemble his or her own computer, each member is in the club to learn.

The club generally provides a number of ways to distribute information. The most common is the meeting, which is generally held monthly. At the meeting, there will usually be a feature presentation of some sort. It may be a preview of a new computer, or perhaps some new software; sometimes there will be a renowned industry spokesperson, and sometimes there will be a local person who is doing something interesting with a computer.

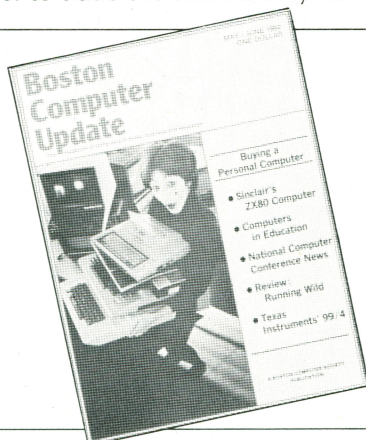
Even if the presentation of the month holds no interest whatsoever for you, it is usually worthwhile to go. At each meeting there are other people and chances are you can learn something from all of them. You can discuss the ins and outs of various computers with people who own them, and you can learn programming tips from people who need to know them to earn a living (they will work

for you, too). You can even find out how to kill the last Space Invader as it zips across the screen. The small talk you make with friends at the meetings may repay the cost of the membership alone.

And the best part is, when you are new to a club, people do not mind your lack of knowledge. It is easy to imagine the computer club as a secret society with special handshakes and a "No Outsiders" sign on the door. But they could not exist with that philosophy. That is why people are there: to trade the secrets they have

information gathered at meetings, the magazines are handy to file away for future reference.

Computer clubs will also sponsor seminars for folks who are interested in learning more about a certain phase of computing. It could be any subject from business computers to learning BASIC—or any other subject there is a demand for. Seminars provide an intensive environment, since they are composed of a small group of people who want to learn about a specific subject. The ready opportunity for feedback in all



**Computer clubs
exist for one reason:
to help demystify
the equipment. Each
member is in the
club to learn.**

uncovered. And if you do not have any secrets to trade that is quite all right—you will catch up soon.

What else is available through a computer club? The club newsletter or magazine, for one. They range widely in physical and literary quality. Some are professionally written and published; some are mimeographed in basements. They all provide some sort of information on a regular basis—information you probably will not learn at the meetings for various reasons—book reviews, in-depth hardware and software profiles, applications notes, news columns, editorials, and what-have-you. It may be somewhat more specialized than your typical computer magazine, since it is aimed at a very specific and well-defined audience. That does not mean it is hard to understand. Unlike

directions helps everybody.

If the computer club is of a general nature, it is likely there will be a number of users' groups. This is where people who are interested in a specific computer or application get together and trade hints and tips without boring the folks who are not interested. The users' groups may be as active—perhaps even more so—than the club itself. It depends on the members and their level of enthusiasm.

And that, essentially, is what a computer club is. The more enthusiastic you are, the more you will get out of it.

If you really want to get a lot out of your local club, volunteer your time. Most clubs are simply run for the fun and the benefit of the membership; their budgets are far smaller than would be needed to pay more than a

few employees, if that. I can speak from experience when I say that a few hours every so often is a rewarding experience. By helping the club out, you will learn more about the industry faster, and you will make plenty of good friends as well.

Getting in touch with your local computer club might take a bit of tracking. The best place to ask is your local computer store; after that, try nearby schools. Start with the nearest large city—clubs tend to be centralized. To start you off, here are a few of the larger regional clubs:

California:

San Diego Computer Society
P.O. Box 85137
San Diego, CA 92138

Colorado:

Denver Amateur Computer Society
1380 S. Santa Fe
Denver, CO 80223

Georgia:

The Atlanta Computer Society
P.O. Box 88771
Atlanta, GA 30338

Massachusetts:

The Boston Computer Society
3 Center Plaza
Boston, MA 02108

New Jersey:

Amateur Computer Group of
New Jersey
1776 Raritan Road
Scotch Plains, NJ 07076

Pennsylvania:

Philadelphia Area Computer Society
P.O. Box 1954
Philadelphia, PA 19105

If you are not near any of these clubs, the closest can probably refer you to your local group.

BYTE and kilobaud Microcomputing also feature computer club listings, as do various other magazines. Keep looking—there is one nearby, waiting to help you.

I do not have the resources of a computer club, but you can still ask me questions by writing to me at *Video Action*, 21 W. Elm, Chicago, IL 60610. Eventually I will devote a column to answering your questions. Next month, we will talk about electronic mail and the ultimate computer clubs—computer networks. (Sounds mysterious, eh?)



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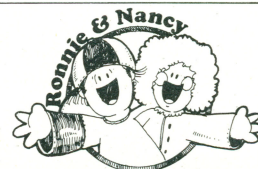
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VIDEO ACTION

express

RESPONSE FROM MIDWEST VIDEO

Q: I just bought your March issue of VIDEO ACTION. I would like to wish you good luck with your magazine. As an owner of a video cassette machine, I found your magazine very interesting, that is, until I came to page 62 of your March issue: I saw the ad from Midwest Home Video.

I ordered three movies from this company back in June of 1980. As of March 1981 I have not seen any of these movies, nor have I heard from Midwest Video in response to the seven letters I have sent them. My payment, however, was accepted by them on July 7, 1980. The amount was \$196.75, which was billed on my charge card the following month. I have received nothing from them to date.

I hope you can check into this for me. I hope you can help me with this problem which has been nagging me for almost 10 months. A.P., Queens, NY

A: We brought the matter to the attention of Midwest Home Video. They apologize profusely for what they call a "bureaucratic mix-up" which occurred with the switching of comptrollers within the company. They assure us that a refund check has been sent to you. Should you have any further problem, please contact us.

MEMORY LANE UPDATE

We received a letter from one of your readers saying he had written to you concerning an ad for Memory Lane magazine from Lubbock, Texas. He asked us to write you a follow-up letter.

My husband and I began Collectors Service Bureau in June of 1980. Since so much of the film collecting hobby is transacted through the mail, there is a

good deal of fraud. We try to act as a mediator when there is a complaint or problem between two collectors.

We started receiving complaints against Rob Tucker several months ago. As of today, we have 14 complaints against him (he runs not only Memory Lane but also Old Movies And Things) totaling \$1,271.02. We have written over 10 letters to him and he has failed to respond to any of them.

Sincerely,
Connie Wilkie
Collectors Service Bureau
10217 Xerxes Avenue South
Bloomington, Minn. 55431

Again, we are warning any and all within range of our column to think twice before doing business with this outfit. In our own case, we have dropped the Memory Lane ads from our pages for two reasons: several serious complaints from readers about rip-offs, and because the joint is into us for a couple thousand dollars worth of unpaid advertising. We have turned our complaint over to the Texas State Attorney General office.

*MCA has
more than 140
discs presently
in stock and
is adding titles
continuously.*

MCA RUMOR DEBUNKED

Q: When searching for some new MCA videodiscs, my local merchant told me his supplier said MCA had cut their catalog down from 150 titles to 50, and once again down to 13. Obviously, I would be very distressed to learn my \$775.00 laser videodisc player will only play 13 different discs. What's with the story? M.T., Los Angeles CA.

A: There is no truth to the rumor, which has received a certain amount of exposure. MCA is having a great deal of difficulty keeping up with demand, but, according to spokesperson Wendie Owen, MCA has more than 140 discs presently in stock and is adding titles continuously. Indeed, the company has just started releasing optical discs in the "extended play" one-hour per side mode.

Additionally, MCA DiscoVision has started manufacturing discs for other companies—a number of these titles can be found in this month's New Releases section.

AN ERIE PROBLEM

Q: I bought a JVC 6700 videocassette recorder 14 months ago and it is now on the blink. My problem lies in the fact that I have been all over town trying to find a place that will repair the machine, but it seems that all the electronics places in Erie will only service those machines which were actually bought from them. Since I bought the machine out-of-town, and since my warranty has expired I am between a rock and a hard place. Could you help me? R.G., Erie, PA

A: We called JVC's Customer Service representative at their main offices in Elmwood Park, New Jersey. They gave us the name of a dealer in your vicinity—Mace Electronics, Inc.

The Omen • Breaking Away • Norma Rae • The French Connection
Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid • Citizen Kane • Julia
The Rose • Poseidon Adventure • King Kong (1933) • An Unmarried
Woman • The Turning Point • Carnal Knowledge • M*A*S*H •
The Graduate • Alien

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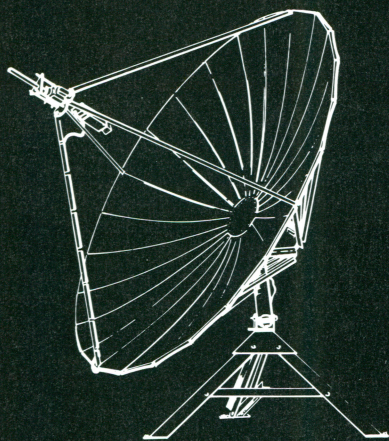
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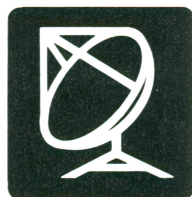
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When we called Mace they told us that *maybe* they would fix your machine *if* you did not buy it through the mails, since they see buying from wholesalers in this fashion as a way of undercutting the retail market. This means they would likely want some form of verification of purchase from a retailer.

The folks at JVC said that if all else fails, they would fix your VCR after you receive a "Merchandise Return Authorization." To get this you have to call them, as well as pay for shipment both ways. In order to get this you have to call them. They have a toll-free number for the continental United States for anyone with similar problems with JVC equipment: 800-447-4700 (except for Illinois and New Jersey residents, who should call 800-526-5308).

NIGHT OF THE BAD DUBS

Q: Back in October 1980 I ordered a VHS cassette entitled NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD (black & white, 1969) from the Videotex catalog. This catalog is published by the Golden Videocassette Library, Norman R. Selinger and Associates, 5415 Butler Road, Bethesda, MD and is nationally advertised in many video publications (Editor's note: not in VIDEO ACTION). Before that title arrived I ordered another cassette, TRIUMPH OF THE WILL (black & white, 1934). Both films arrived in mid-November. I had previously viewed both films from another distributor and they were of excellent quality. However, when I watched the Selinger cassettes they were terrible.

Thinking it might be my machine which was at fault I watched them on a friend's VCR. They were still terrible. Contrast on both of them made the picture barely recognizable and the background hiss was so bad I could not make out the dialogue. Both films had the NRS Golden Videocassette Library label and appeared, from the quality, to be poor fourth or fifth generation dubs, according to a video electronics specialist I showed them to. Subsequently I wrote the company requesting authorization to return the tapes for suitable replacements. Though I have not sent them the tapes, I have not heard from them.

My question is: Is this a reputable firm? Also, have you had any similar complaints? T.A.W., Miami, FL

A: Yours is the second complaint we have received about the Selinger organization; we ran the first in our April issue. The Montgomery County Better Business Bureau said they had received two complaints about the company, one about dissatisfaction with a purchase, the other concerning a charge of false advertising.

While the first complaint we received was about undelivered merchandise—which we are still working on with the Montgomery County BBB, we would have to say that Selinger does appear to be "reputable" in that most people receive the merchandise they request. We will add your complaint to the one already in the works and see what we can do for you, after you send us a copy of your original purchase statement and a copy of your cancelled check or credit card statement.

* * *

A NOTE TO ALL READERS WITH CONSUMER COMPLAINTS

As noted above, it is *essential* that you send along with your complaints proof of purchase for all items which you have not received, or which have come to you in damaged or unacceptable condition, or which have been substituted with something you did not originally order. Sending along this type of info will help us immensely as well as speed up the process of getting you satisfaction. Thanks.

* * *

Video Action Express is our monthly reader service column. If you have a problem with a video manufacturer or dealer, if you cannot get satisfaction from a direct mail merchant, if you cannot get quality service from your pay television or cable supplier, or if you just have a particular question about the world of video, write us. We'll do our best to clear up the problem.

Send your correspondence to:

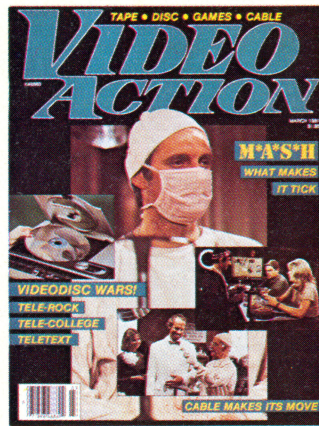
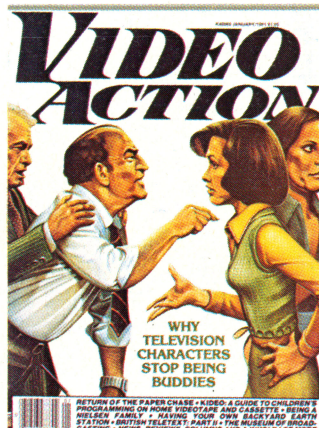
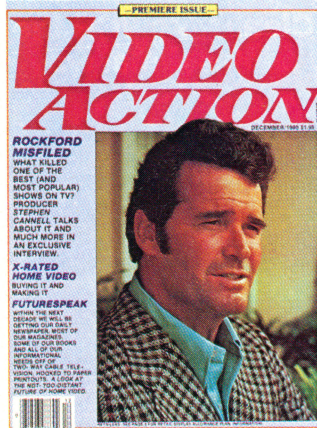
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The First Total Video Magazine

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VIDEO ACTION is the best possible guide for living in the video world.

VIDEO ACTION. Take control of your T.V.

Newsline

PRESS TIME ... AT PRESS TIME ... AT PRESS TIME ... AT PRESS TIME ... AT PRESS TIME ... AT

NEW PRODUCTS

IT'LL MAKE THE DUKES OF HAZZARD LOOK GOOD!

Television goes Zen!

A San Francisco company has come up with a product which creates a whole new use for your television set. The Channel 1 Mood Synthesizer is a high-quality, injection molded plastic lens which fits over your television screen. It serves both aesthetic and psychological functions.

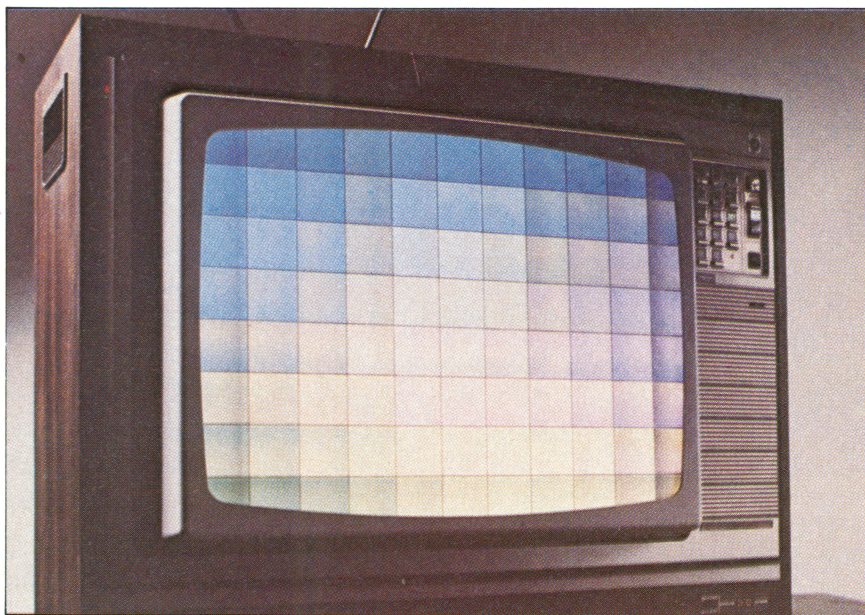
Essentially, what this lens does is refract and spread the screen's light into a constantly changing mosaic pattern of multi-colored cubes.

Why? Well, it is quite decorative, but the people who market Channel 1 also push it as a meditative device. Brainchild of computer expert Dr. George Lowe, 38, the creator notes,

"Computer people spend many hours staring into TV screens while they are trying to think. There is a whole generation which uses television for employment and information. Naturally, this focus on the TV is adaptive so that now, with a whole TV-worker generation, there are people who can get into television as a meditative source while not being put through a TV program."

The Channel 1 Mood Synthesizer fits onto any 21-inch or smaller color television screen with a Velcro tab to make pretty patterns for those who want to vegetate in front of the tube *without* being subjected to *Charlie's Angels* or *The Love Boat*. Suggested retail price of this device is \$19.95. For further information call 800-358-9999; in California, 800-862-4999.

Or, you might try contacting them via astral projection.



WELL, THAT'S ONE WAY TO AVOID NOSEY NEIGHBORS!

A closed circuit television system from Sharp Electronics—once marketed by the company's Professional Products Department through security and audio-visual dealers—is now available to the consumer market.

The unit, Model IT-25 UA is intended

for home and business uses. With a suggested retail price of \$525, it includes a compact camera, a nine-inch monitor, and a two-way intercom. The entire system, according to Sharp, is easily installed by the consumer.

The camera weighs two pounds and comes with a standard 16mm F1.6 "C" mount lens which adjusts automatically to changing light. It is



unaffected by extremes of weather, voltage, or humidity and comes with 33 feet of cable. Sharp recommends an illumination of 200 Lux.

The two-way intercom offers a talk button that activates the system for approximately 30 seconds so you can see who is at the door. It is easily mounted on the wall, ceiling, or door and is designed with a weather sealed, two-inch round type speaker. It weighs nine ounces. The solid state nine-inch (diagonal) television monitor works off 120 volts with a power consumption of only 32 watts when in operation and eight watts at standby. This 16 pound monitor also comes with a two-inch speaker.

Optional accessories include an extension cable, camera housing, camera selector (to allow for up to three cameras to be hooked up to the monitor), wide-angle and telephoto lenses, and a motor driven scanner.

A system like this could very well mark the demise of door-to-door salesmen.

WOOD YOU BELIEVE . . . ?

Those of you who have decried the sorry state of video furniture and its propensity toward particle board construction will be happy to hear that there is a company out there building their cabinets out of real, honest-to-goodness wood.

Custom Woodwork and Design Incorporated of Willow Springs, Illinois has unveiled its line of solid wood design furniture for your component electronic and video equipment. The Woodmore Lowboy features a hand rubbed oil finish, bronze tempered glass doors, fully adjustable shelves, and chrome hardware and casters.

The Lowboy's dimensions are 30"



high, 47 $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide, and 19" deep, with an inside storage area of two compartments each measuring 27 $\frac{7}{8}$ " by 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ " by 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". You also get an option of woods; either natural oak, dark oak, or natural walnut for the suggested retail prices of \$400 (natural oak), \$410 (dark oak), and \$500 (natural walnut).

PICTURE PERFECT PICTURES

Dirty lenses a problem?

BIB thinks they have the answer for you, having just unveiled the newest addition to their extensive Videophile Edition line, the VE-13 Video Lens Care Kit.



Since dust and fingerprints on video camera lenses impair video image quality, this kit provides the home and outdoor recordist with a convenient antidote: a carry-along wallet containing a retractable lens brush (complete with dust cover), a lens cleaning fluid, and anti-static cleaning cloth.

It might be worth the suggested \$8.95 price to make certain Aunt Sadie is captured on tape without any fuzz around her.

TAKE THAT, IMPERIALIST RUNNING DOG LACKEYS!

Mr. Whipple haters of America, arise! You have nothing to lose but your high blood pressure, and a world of aesthetically pleasing video viewing

to gain!

New from Videomega of Portland, Oregon is the first product designed to kill both picture and sound on the television by remote control for automatically-timed periods of 30 or 60 seconds: the Ad*Zap Wireless TV Commercial Killer makes annoying commercials go away on your television screen!

While other remote controls have a "mute" button to silence offending ads, visuals are still present, forcing you to still watch if not hear designer jean and other commercials. Ad*Zap allows you to deep-six the picture as



well, with normal audio and visual returning when the commercials are over. The unit consists of a hand-held infrared remote control, a receiver for the top of your set, and a relay board installed inside the television.

Also available is a special model with a connecting cord for operating the "pause" control of a video cassette recorder for operation during commercials.

When an unwanted commercial appears on your screen, you point the remote control at your set, press the button, and the sound goes off, at the same time activating the timer. A second press of the magic button and the picture goes blank. Just think... no more reminders of bad breath, menstrual cramps, headaches, dirty



laundry, or constipation—unless, of course, you want them. And should you spot a new record from K-Tel you would like to have, you have the option of bringing back picture and sound anytime you like. When the

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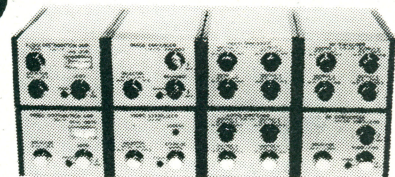
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unit is in operation the electron beam is turned off, giving your television a short "rest."

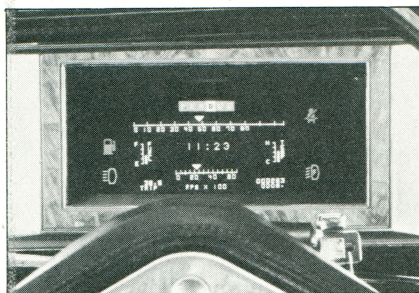
Prices for the Ad*Zap range from \$69 to \$99, depending on your choice of available options. You get a choice of remote control models—either the conventional palm-sized box or a plastic replica of a six-gun. The six-gun has a range of over 35 feet and a narrow beam pattern that requires good aim. A sharp-shooting medal is not required for the wider beam of the box unit. Both are powered by a standard nine volt battery.

The receiver is housed in a beige and ivory case about the size of a pocket calculator. It has a 30 or 60 second selector switch and lights to indicate "sound off" and "picture off" during the timing interval. Power for the receiver comes from a small wall-plug transformer and connects with the board inside the television by means of a plug.

One drawback for some is installation of the system requires a bit of knowledge of your set's internal workings. Otherwise, installation requires the services of a technician. But isn't it worth it never to have to watch Mr. Whipple squeeze his Charmin again?

"FILL 'ER UP, AND CHECK THE OIL AND PROGRAMMING!"

The Zenith Radio Corporation has introduced an automotive video accessory—a vehicular cathode ray tube



(V-CRT), which will effectively computerize those cars and off-road vehicles which have it as an accessory. The V-CRT display uses a small television picture tube with specially formulated phosphors in conjunction with a new electron gun design. The result is an instrument display which gives data and graphics regarding the car's operation in a sharp, clear format easily readable in both bright and dim light.

Designed for the maximum flexibility required for interface with microprocessor-controlled automotive electrical systems, the Zenith V-CRT permits display of such operating data as speed, fuel, coolant levels, temperature, and oil pressure, as well as time, turn signals, headlights, and other information. All this—and in six colors to boot.

On pushbutton command, the V-CRT monitor can also display data like miles-to-empty, estimated time of arrival, maps, travel information, and diagnostic and service data.

The V-CRT also provides multi-language read-outs for the international markets.

The instrument panel and related technologies took Zenith three years to research and develop. Since it has not yet been released for the general automotive market, its retail price has not been decided.

Teen-agers probably will not like this new device . . . those on dates won't be able to conveniently run out of gas on backroads with the V-CRT keeping them up to date on their fuel situation!

VCRs

ON SECOND THOUGHT . . .

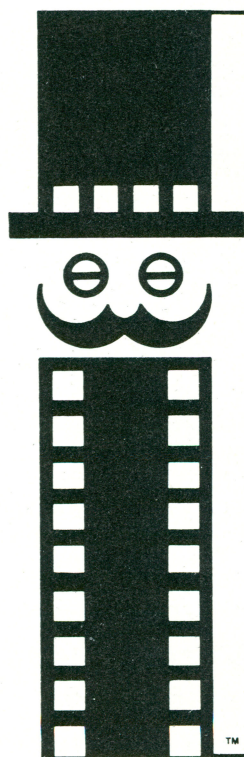
Magnetic Video, a division of Twentieth Century-Fox has taken a half-step back from its previously announced policy of releasing video cassettes of current theatrical films 90 days after their release in the theaters. They originally made this move to help combat the growing incidence of illegally duplicated and distributed films on pirated video cassettes by beating the pirates to the marketplace.

The strategy is admirable, but the film industry's reception of it was anything but favorable.

The company's first two such marketing ventures, *9 to 5* and *The Stunt Man*, were very successful: both films shipped gold—that means \$1,000,000 in advance sales. *9 to 5* has since gone platinum: \$2,000,000 in advance sales. But, as the result of the criticism of this policy from the National Association of Theater Owners and others, Magnetic Video has announced it will slightly modify its home video "release window."

Henceforth, rather than the previously mentioned blanket 90-day release date for its software, each film in the distributor's catalog will be judged on a picture-by-picture basis. Mag Video will also make certain that all involved in the movie's distribution will be notified of the date of its home debut.

Theater owners have been expressing concern that early release of video cassettes of hot, big box office motion pictures will seriously cut into their already dwindling profits. What Magnetic Video's new policy clarification means is that it will hold back on at least some of the hits a bit longer than 90-days, thereby giving the pictures time to run their course in the theaters before releasing them to video retailers.



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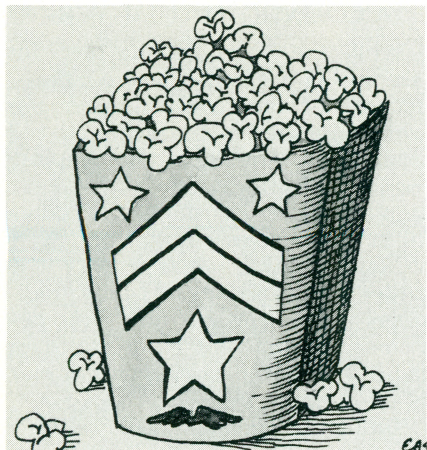
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... OR MAYBE THEY JUST DON'T LIKE THE POPCORN

Cable and home video are being blamed for a substantial drop in attendance last year at thousands of cinemas run by the U.S. military for its personnel stationed on foreign soil. A



total of 1136 theaters around the globe are run by the Army and Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) for the members of both services.

The AAFES noted a nearly five percent drop in 1980 ticket revenue. In those free theaters run by the Exchange in remote locations—where feature films are usually shown in 16mm—attendance dropped even more sharply: 16%. The Navy Motion Picture Service, which operates 1458 theaters of its own worldwide, has been experiencing similar declines in military movie goers. A Department of Defense study notes that the AAFES and Navy film services are doing a good job and should continue, but the relatively recent advent of video cassettes, discs, and cable television at military bases has caused these declines.

The situation in the military may be a portent of things to come in civilian life—some domestic theater owners fear the same trend in movie attendance is being mirrored right here at home.

JOIN THE CLUB CLUB

CBS is venturing further into the home video market with the inauguration of a mail order video club. Expected to get underway by late summer or early fall, the club will be run by Columbia House, the division of the CBS Records Group which also runs the Columbia Record and Tape Club.

At first the club will deal only video cassettes in the VHS and Beta formats. But, at some unspecified future time, the club expects to branch out into the direct mail marketing of video-

discs as well. According to Ralph Colin, Jr., vice president of business and government affairs for Columbia House, the new club will wait on the sidelines to see which disc format will sell best before deciding which kind to carry.

The club intends to carry non-exclusive theatrical film material... they will have what everyone else has. They will, however, also carry special children's programming, how-to material, sports, and educational fare.

SO MUCH FOR PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE

The Sony Corporation sees the ongoing push to sell the American public on the various videodisc systems—particularly RCA's \$22,000,000 ad push for its new capacitance (CED) system—as a plus in selling its Betamax video cassette recorder.

Bill Baker, vice president of communications at Sony, notes, "When the RCA ads break, we'll have something out there to reinforce the message of Betamax's recording capability." Baker continued, "We plan to take advantage of the opportunity to emphasize the fact that there's nothing a disc player can do that a Betamax can't do. We think people who walk into a store in response to RCA's campaign may say, 'Gosh, we didn't know the disc player couldn't record.'"

All this flies in the face of prior predictions by many industry insiders—particularly the manufacturers of disc hardware and software—that the disc player and VCR will exist side-by-side with little competition between them. Many feel discs and VCRs are two distinct and separate markets.

Sony presently has no plans to enter the disc market. RCA has cornered about a 35% share of the VCR market with its VHS format recorder.

WE'LL FIGHT 'EM IN THE BEDROOMS!

Miami, Florida is gearing up for a war on pornographic video cassettes. The city attorney's office will test a recently passed City Council ordinance which seeks to stop the sale of certain X-rated titles by threatening to yank the operating licenses of non-complying businesses.

The ordinance, passed last December, prohibits the sale of specific sex-cassettes permanently enjoined by court order. The city, in an attempt to avoid charges of selective enforcement, has notified video, record, and tape merchandisers that by carrying the banned materials they could have their business licenses taken away.

It is reported most Miami merchants

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have opted to clear their stores of these dirty tapes rather than risk the wrath of puritanical city fathers. To date, no one has taken the matter to court to test the ordinance's constitutionality.

FOR SALE: A COUNTRY FULL OF VCRs

While the video cassette recorder is enjoying a growing and continual acceptance throughout most of the world, one society has decided to call a halt to the video revolution exploding inside its borders.

In Islamabad, Pakistan a tribal council in the Khyber Pass has outlawed VCRs, which they see as a device that undermines and negates their traditional values and customs. This decision was reached by a group in Jamrud of Kuki (sic) clan elders, part of the Pashtun tribe.

Though VCRs already have been banned throughout Pakistan, such action has done little to deter smugglers who have successfully thwarted the best efforts of the Pakistani customs department and the Kuki elders. VCRs cost a small fortune for those willing to defy both law and tribal custom to own one, although the price has not stopped anyone determined to have the latest in video technology: VCR sales are reported to be high.

TOUCHDOWN!

There is a lot of money to be made in the home video field, even for the smaller software dealers. To give you an idea of the kinds of bucks some software producers are bringing in, NFL Films' video division brought in \$750,000 in its first 10 months of operation. And in their fiscal year ending next April, they expect to gross over \$1,000,000 in sales.

NFL Films' sales director David Grossman noted several interesting aspects of the home video sports field:

*Sales, as might be expected, are seasonal, fluctuating in sales roughly equivalent to the football season. As the season nears its end, sales tend to drop off.

*Rentals have a detrimental effect on sales, but help expose the NFL cassettes to the public nonetheless.

*Fans in areas with loyalty to a particular team do not tend to be interested in purchasing cassettes featuring the gridiron goings-on of other cities' teams. Those cities with losing football teams—like New York's Giants and Jets—are equally uninterested in reliving the agony of their teams' defeats through the magic of video.

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	\$5.50 ea.	\$4.25 ea.

Double Holder Holds 2 Tapes
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VHS #VCHV2 Size: 9 1/4" x 11" x 1 1/4"

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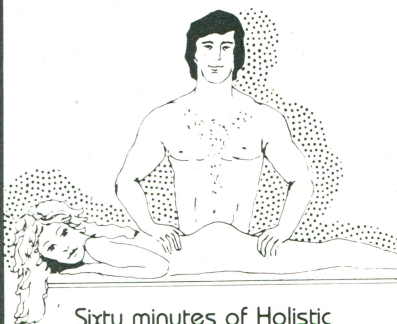
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Next year NFL Films will produce and distribute a series of cassettes featuring the best players at each gridiron position.

It is expected that such a series will transcend a certain amount of regional sales reticence. The company, incidentally, foresees taking the plunge into the field of videodiscs late next year.

A REAL MICKEY MOUSE SUIT

Video cassette rentals are more popular than ever, but then, so are the abuses that go along with it.

Walt Disney Telecommunications has claimed a legal victory against one of the rental abusers, Home Video Specialties. Disney's prerecorded cas-

sically prohibiting HVS from continuing its rental practices with Disney material, does ban them from repackaging the studio's cassettes. They are also required to prominently display a statement that they are not an authorized seller or renter of Disney video features, though Disney indicated they would welcome HVS and its affiliates to the authorized rental program in the future.

NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

Time-Life Films is getting out of "regular" television programming and theatrical film distribution for what it sees as the greener pastures of the home video market.

The company will sell most of its television and film assets to another film distributor so it can concentrate



sette arm sued the California company for copyright infringement after it was discovered that the latter were repackaging, renting, and advertising Disney cassettes on their own and not through the special Disney rental program. The studio that Mickey built signs on dealers and supplies them with specially marked cassettes stating they are "for rental only." This way, of course, Disney receives a piece of the rental action. With Home Video Specialties' method, they did not.

The company has made an out-of-court settlement with Disney. The consent judgement, while not speci-

its resources on cable, pay cable, teletext, and video software. One of the main reasons for the move is that Time-Life Films has been in financial hot water for the past few years, posting an after tax loss of \$9,000,000 for 1980 alone.

Two of Time-Life's subsidiaries—Time-Life Video and the Time-Life Video Club—are not included in the deal.

QUITE A YEN

The Japanese Finance Ministry has released some interesting figures regarding the production, export, and sales of video cassette recorders.



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According to the Ministry's figures, VCRs replaced color televisions as Japan's biggest foreign exchange earner during 1980. Worldwide VCR exports reached \$2.13 billion, almost double the 1979 sales figures. Their color television exports rose 41% in 1980 to \$1.37 billion.

In terms of individual machine units, VCRs rose an astounding 106.1% to 3.44 million units, with the majority of these going to European markets, which itself rose 152.6% to 1.31 million units. Exports to the U.S. rose as well, up 51.9% during last year to 1.03 million machines. Total Japanese VCR production last year was 4.44 million, up 102% from 1979. Projected 1981 VCR production is expected to be close to 7,000,000 units, nearly double the number they produced in 1980.

DISCS

EENIE, MEENIE, MINIE, MOE!

The folks at Sharp Electronics have made their choice in the videodisc format fight.

They have chosen the video high density (VHD) system as the one they intend to manufacture and distribute. To recap, VHD is also known as "grooveless capacitance," because of the way a flat metal "shoe" rides the surface of the disc, picking up the electronic signals encoded on the conductive vinyl disc. The system features all the same special effects (including stereo audio) as the laser/optical disc player. Like the RCA grooved capacitance (CED) system's disc, the VHD platter is housed in a protective sleeve because dirt and scratches affect it just like standard audio records.

The Sharp VHD system will be on the market by early 1982, about the same time the other VHD manufacturers—including General Electric, Quasar, Panasonic, JVC, and Sansui—hit the marketplace with their products.

Sharp delayed its announcement of the disc player because it wanted to make certain that the library of films and other programming was comparable in selection to that of the laser/optical and CED systems. Sharp says that there is now enough programming available to make their player format competitive, though they, unlike RCA, have no plans at this time to manufacture their own discs.

While full product details are not yet available, Sharp stresses that its disc format choice reflects the company's basic philosophy behind its commitment to the VHD videodisc.

They want to market a player that is compact, has stereo sound, and is compatible with Pulse Code Modulation recording; one that will maximize the users' desire for full special effects functions, and can be priced competitively with consideration for its "greater versatility over the other systems."

The VHD format looks like it will become the system of choice for Japan. The Japanese government currently will not allow any company to market any of the disc formats until a consensus can be reached among manufacturers as to which one will be the domestic Japanese standard. Four more Japanese disc player producers have jumped on the VHD bandwagon, bringing the total up to 10.

WHY BUY?

Once videodiscs hit the market in a big way—and perhaps even sooner—you can expect to be able to rent discs as well as buy them.

Like video cassettes, it is expected discs will be a popular rental item, even though they are considerably cheaper to buy. Currently, disc prices range from \$5.95 (for Julia Child cooking chickens on an MCA laser/optical disc) to \$99.98 (for the four discs containing *Jesus of Nazareth* from RCA's capacitance system). Rentals, it is believed, will be brisk for feature-film discs in the \$20-plus range.

RCA's Herb Schlosser admits that his company is unlikely to be able to enforce any anti-rental policies with videodisc retailers, many of whom are talking about \$3-\$5 rental fees per title.

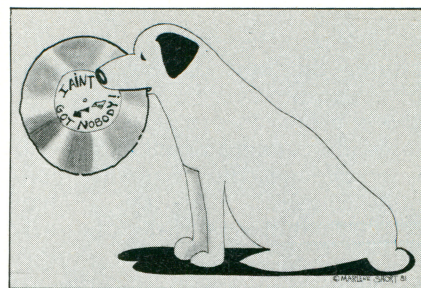
HIS MASTER'S DISC

Some of the major motion picture studios that plan to distribute their films on capacitance (CED) videodiscs on their own may find themselves coming up rather short on marketable product for the foreseeable future.

This is because they have nowhere to go to make the discs.

The CED discs, for the new RCA Selectavision videodisc player, need special facilities for "custom-pressing." As of yet, such facilities have not been finished. This will result in a long delay of many titles from some of the major studios like Warners and Columbia which have decided not to license their films for distribution by RCA.

Likewise, 20th Century-Fox and MGM are not expected to renew existing licensing agreements with RCA—though they were the first major studios to jump on the capacitance system bandwagon—in order to conduct their own disc marketing



in the future.

According to RCA Selectavision executive vice president Herb Schlosser, "RCA is not now custom pressing or accepting custom pressing orders, but we plan to do so in the future." RCA has only a single plant currently operating capable of pressing its CED discs. RCA itself needs this plant's full capacity to produce the 3,000,000 discs its parent company will need for the current year.

CBS has invested \$22,000,000 in a similar facility in Carrollton, Georgia and many of the now non-aligned movie studios hope this plant will be able to satisfy their needs for mastering and reproducing the discs. RCA does not believe its facility will be available to do custom pressing until late 1983 or early 1984, and then only for around 10% of the plant's yearly output.

Columbia Pictures, meanwhile, will become the first studio to release laser/optical videodiscs under its own label. They have an agreement with DiscoVision Associates to press their product, including *California Suite* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

Still, as optimistic as RCA's Schlosser is concerning the availability of his company's discs, some dealers are expecting there to be inadequate quantities at first, particularly to smaller, neighborhood software stores. While established RCA outlets will probably receive an adequate inventory of titles, the smaller dealers may have to accept only 20 or so of the 100 titles in the RCA catalog, and then only about a dozen copies of each. Separate title orders from dealers will cost them an additional \$2.70 per disc, which will ultimately be paid by the consumer.

Another problem mentioned by some dealers is what they consider the small profit margins on the variously priced discs: dealers pay \$11.25 for discs that retail at \$14.95; \$15.00 for \$19.95 discs; \$18.75 for \$24.98 discs; and \$21.00 for \$27.98 discs.

Some dealers are also skeptical about getting an adequate stock of the CED players themselves. RCA will at first "ration" three of the units per video specialty store, and they are

strongly urging dealers not to sell their display models or discount from the company's suggested list price of \$499.95. RCA has warned them that display disc players may be difficult to obtain for the next year or so.

The stores pay RCA \$389.00 per unit, netting a grand total of \$110.95 from each player. In order to avoid selling their display models, the dealers would like to be supplied with enough of them to match the projected consumer demand. Chances are, however, they may have to wait a long time for this to happen.

RCA, on the other hand, sees no such immediate problems since both their disc and player manufacturing schedules are running ahead of projections.

CABLE

KIRSHNER KABLE

Video rock/pop music empressario Don ("a close personal friend of mine") Kirshner of *Rock Concert* fame has plans to create the Don Kirshner Cable Network.

States promotor Kirshner, "I want to be the next Lorimar, the next Norman Lear, on software for cable... I see the handwriting on the wall for cable. We will put the right show on the right system for the right audience. I feel the same way about cable as I felt about rock music in the 1950s. The sky's the limit."

Kirshner has plowed about \$5,000,000 into his cable venture so far and expects to put at least twice that amount into the project by 1984. He envisions providing cable viewers with 12 hours of programming daily, all over his very own satellite transponder. He sees an eclectic mix of programming aimed at everyone from children to seniors: sports, physical fitness, investment, education, pet care—all done with an eye toward keeping things entertaining.

Kirshner's organization already has several cable television shows running, with three of them appearing on the Satellite Programming Network: *It's A Great Idea*, based on *Family Circle* magazine's series of how-to articles; *Real Money*, a program aimed at the small investor; and *Good Livin'* which deals with new products on the consumer market.

CAN GUYS WATCH TOO?

Ted Turner's WTBS superstation from Atlanta, Georgia is reaching over 11,000,000 homes across the nation

(Continued on page 30)

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**An
interview
with
HENRY
KLOSS**

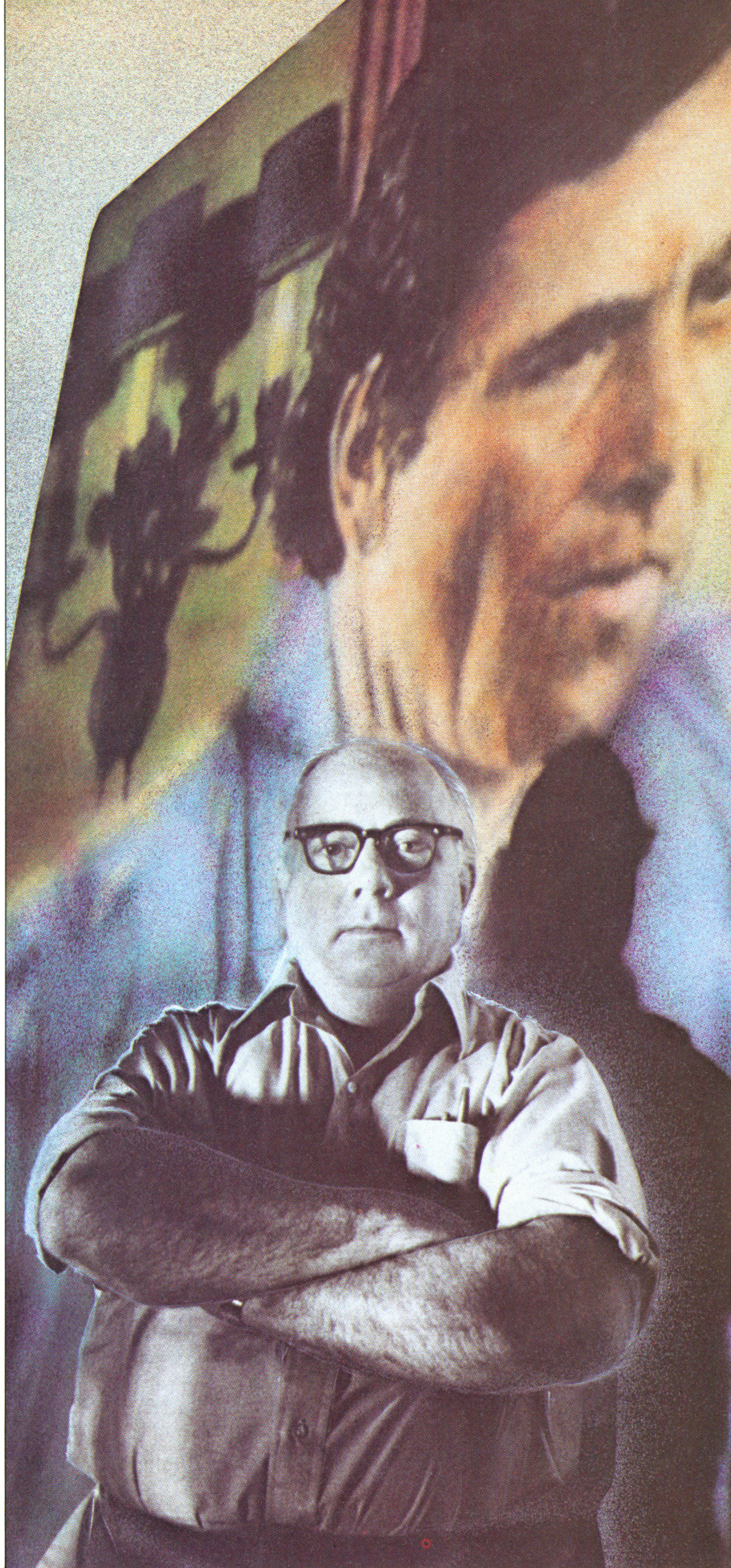


Photo: Boston Globe

Interview by Rick Oliver

For over 10 years, Henry Kloss has been the lone voice in the wilderness crying out for bigger televisions—much bigger televisions. His most recent accomplishment in this vein is the highly acclaimed Kloss Novabeam projection set which consists of a freestanding six and one-half foot diagonal screen and a projector/tuner that looks like a coffee table with flight controls.

Henry Kloss is a familiar name to audiophiles. He was one of the founders of Acoustic Research which originally operated out of a loft overlooking Harvard Square. After 10 years as the "K" at KLH, Kloss moved on to form Advent Corporation where he developed one of the best-selling loudspeakers in high fidelity history.

While at Advent, he pioneered the three tube projection system

which employs a separate beam for each of the primary colors—red, green, and blue. The monochrome pictures from all three tubes converge on the screen to form a single, full-color image. This system was later adopted by almost all manufacturers of projection televisions, including Sony, Panasonic, and Mitsubishi.

It has been an uphill struggle for Kloss. For years, no one else believed large-screen projection television was a viable commercial product, and financial backing was hard to come by. But Kloss remained convinced.

He left Advent in 1977 to start Kloss Video where he continues his crusade today. We talked to him at Kloss Video headquarters, in Cambridge, Massachusetts to get the straight dope on projection television—past, present, and future.

VIDEO ACTION: In 1967, you left KLH to form Advent, which is probably better known for its audio components rather than video products. Did you intend to make projection televisions from the outset?

KLOSS: I formed Advent for the sole purpose of making projection televisions. Initially, I was the sole proprietor and only employee, and I financed the company with my own money for the first two years.

VA: When you started Advent with this idea of making projection televisions, did you have any idea what you were doing?

KLOSS: Yes. Toward the end at KLH, I noticed that it would take less energy to create a 10 times larger picture with the same brightness as a conventional 25 inch set. The color television tube is a very energy-inefficient device.

The technology involved in projection television was known to a lot of people prior to 1967. My contribution was realizing that it would take less energy and believing that a significantly larger television picture was a desirable product. Anybody could have done it 10 years before I did.

VA: You eventually turned to designing and selling audio components at Advent. Did you do this simply to generate more capital for the development of projection television?

KLOSS: Well, it often has been described that way, but it is never that simple. In business, one always does the easiest undone thing that is there to be done.

When I left KLH, I predicted audio components would become a very big business and would be picked up by the large corporations like RCA. I was right on one point—it became a very big business. But the major corporations did not believe there would be a market for component audio equipment. So, there was business just sitting there waiting to be done, and I decided to go back into the audio trade.

VA: The first Advent projection set

THE FATHER AND HIGH PRIEST OF PROJECTION TELEVISION

had the three color tubes in a triangular configuration rather than the straight-line format used in later Advent models and currently utilized by all manufacturers of three-tube projection systems. What was the reason for the change?

KLOSS: I preferred the triangular arrangement. I wanted to keep the three tubes as close together as

optical systems for projection television is what Kloss Video is all about. Kloss Video originally was formed to license this technology to other companies. But nobody was willing to make the large initial investment required to establish the facilities to make the special tube and optical system. So we decided to do it ourselves.

“Television is equated with that constricted, constipated little picture, and a six and one half foot diagonal picture is viewed as strange and unnatural.”

possible. I had technical and aesthetic reasons for making it that way. But people did not want a projector in that shape. They did not want a white, sculpted plastic thing in their living rooms.

VA: Customers prefer a projector that looks more like a coffee table?

KLOSS: The less obtrusive projector quickly became the more desirable form. The three in-line tubes make it possible to produce a housing for the projector that looks more like a conventional piece of furniture.

VA: In 1977, you left Advent to start Kloss Video. Why did you leave a company where you were already making projection televisions to form another company to make projection televisions?

KLOSS: I spent a lot of money during my last year at Advent developing large-scale production for a very complicated projection set, the now famous model 1000A. There were those who felt that this was not a worthwhile expenditure, and I subsequently was excluded from all decisions concerning product determination.

I stayed at Advent long enough to produce the quick-and-easy form of projection television, the model 750, which is the form that was adopted by most companies for their projection sets, with the exception of what we are doing at Kloss Video.

VA: You recently purchased additional facilities, previously occupied by Advent, to increase production of the Kloss Novabeam. Have you been having trouble keeping up with the demand for your projection system?

KLOSS: A simpler way to make high-performance, high-technology

We had to spend millions of dollars on the physical facilities to produce the parts, and we have only been able to make 100 projection sets per week. By September, we should be making 200 sets a week.

VA: What distinguishes the Novatron picture tube from the tubes in other projection systems?

KLOSS: Other projection systems utilize conventional monochrome tubes. A lens is placed *in front of* each tube to project the picture onto the screen. The Novatron tube employs a spherical mirror *built into* the tube as the main projecting lens. This integrated optical system is more efficient and costs less to produce.

Incidentally, the availability of a low-cost, precision plastic lens was probably the single most important factor in the evolution of projection television. Almost all the lenses being used in projection sets are made by one company—U.S. Precision, located in Cincinnati. Even the Japanese are using U.S. Precision lenses.

When I developed the Novatron tube I thought, “Fine. Now all I have to do is sell this system to other companies and I can retire.”

VA: Do you still have plans to sell the technology and get out of the business?

KLOSS: No. Not after all the effort I have put into it. If someone wanted a license to manufacture and sell the Novatron optical system now, the price would be very high.

VA: Were companies unwilling to make the investment because they did not think there was a market for projection television?

KLOSS: It is largely that. For instance, RCA finally decided they

had to have a projection television, and they had previously made it quite clear that it was *not* a product category they were interested in. They could not believe there was a market for projection television.

Of course, these are the same people who refused to believe that there was a market for component audio equipment. They only made a commitment to projection after they had seen the sales figures for other manufacturers' systems.

VA: Estimates of the potential market for projection television vary widely depending on who you are talking to. What kind of growth do you expect in sales over the next few years?

KLOSS: There were approximately 50,000 projection sets sold in 1980 and enough lenses have been ordered from U.S. Precision to make 100,000 sets in 1981.

VA: You are expecting one hundred percent growth in one year?

KLOSS: Well, this has been the history of many products. Tape recorders were around for several years and nothing much happened. All of a sudden, people decided that this was a worthwhile product, and tape recorder sales doubled in one year and continued to climb thereafter.

The number of projection television suppliers will more than double in 1981, and the number of dealers will almost double.

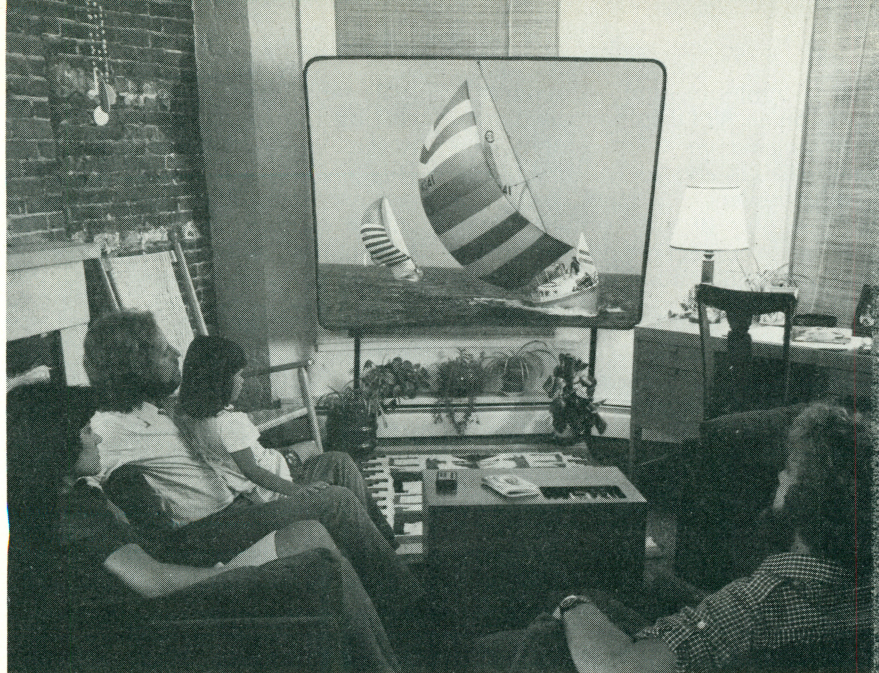
VA: Do you see the entry of the industry giants such as RCA, Panasonic, and Sony as enhancing the appeal and demand for projection television?

KLOSS: It will help promote the idea that a projection television is not a weird, oddball thing to have in the home. I have been waiting for that for seven years!

Television is equated with that constricted, constipated little picture, and a six and one half foot diagonal picture has been viewed as strange and unnatural. Finally, projection television will no longer appear to be a bizarre aberration.

VA: Many people in the industry believe the one-piece projection television will command the lion's share of the market. The Kloss Novabeam is a two-piece system with a projector and a freestanding screen. Do you have any plans to make a one-piece unit?

KLOSS: No. I agree that the one-piece unit will probably be the dominant form of projection television, but we do not intend to produce a one-piece set.



There seems to be a tendency to make new products appear to be something other than what they are, to make them look like old familiar things. The first automobiles looked just like horse-drawn carriages, but without the horses.

Philosophically, I am against the idea of trying to make a projection television look like an ordinary cabinet, hiding the screen behind doors. This kind of thinking is carried to extremes with the new Advent set. The screen folds down on top of the projector so that the whole thing looks like a table when not in use.

People into gourmet cooking are proud to display their copper pots and other accessories. It is a sign of sophistication. But they are ashamed of their televisions. The fact that eating is apparently more noble than watching television says something about what people watch on television. There is something basic there that no one has really addressed.

Our plan is to make only the largest, highest quality picture that we possibly can. We will appeal to that segment of the market that is really serious about video rather than to those more easily impressed by superficial, cosmetic factors.

VA: The Kloss Novabeam now retails for \$2,995, \$500 more than it cost last year. What will happen to projection television prices in the future?

KLOSS: The Novabeam is so large, so bright, and so good at \$3000 that I like to think we have put a cap on the price. Sony has a strong commitment to projection, and they could not make their set profitable for less than \$3000. But they could

not charge more and still be competitive.

VA: Do you see prices coming down?

KLOSS: Perhaps, a bit, but not like calculators. There are already fairly good sets in the \$2000 range. They do not have remote control, and the picture is not big enough, but they are acceptable.

We will always make the one that is bigger, brighter, and better. Our system probably will never cost less than \$2,500 and maybe not less than \$3000.

We started out with much more highly developed products than is usually the case. Consumers are normally used as guinea pigs to test new products. The early period of over-priced, under-performing equipment has been largely eliminated in the development of projection television.

VA: Do you think that the recent proliferation of video cassette recorders, videodisc players, and the wide range of additional program material they provide the viewer, particularly movies, will make projection television more attractive to the public?

KLOSS: Unfortunately, I have yet to see a video cassette or disc with picture quality anywhere close to that of an off-the-air broadcast.

VA: Even laser optical videodiscs?

KLOSS: I have a standing offer—I will trade a videodisc machine for a disc that is as good as an off-the-air broadcast. Most prerecorded discs and tapes have a fair amount of background "noise" that interferes with the picture. The disadvantage with projection sets is that the larger picture makes this noise more noticeable.

I think that the great advantage of the laser optical disc system is that it *could* produce a disc with picture quality equivalent to or better than an off-the-air broadcast, but no one has made a disc that demonstrates how good the system can be. That is what we are working on right now with the Philips people.

The one undone job for me now is to get someone to make technically better program material, and it might

The NOVABEAM Model One is a two-piece projection color television set, consisting of an unusually compact receiver/projector console and a separate free-standing screen which provides a 6.5' diagonal-measure picture.

be possible with the laser optical disc. I think that direct satellite reception also has the potential to substantially improve picture quality, if they put the right stuff into it.

VA: What do you see in the future for video?

KLOSS: The evolutionary thing is for video to follow the path of audio equipment. I can see great advantages to component television. Instead of having just a television set with all the components in one box, the various components should be manufactured and sold separately. Tuners should be separate from the projection unit. Substantial improvements in reception could be made if as much attention went into television tuners as went into FM radio tuners.

Some innovative things are happening concerning the manner in which an image is created on the television screen. Sharp has produced a liquid crystal display television. It has a very small monochrome picture, about 1 1/2 inches diagonal, and it is very dim. I didn't even know it was on until I looked closely. This is an important development, but it will be years before they produce an acceptable color picture, and even longer before they have one that is larger than a conventional television screen. RCA's estimate for a 30 by 40 inch liquid crystal display is 1990, and they are working harder in this area than anybody else.

In terms of projection television, I think the Novabeam will be state-of-the-art for some time to come. I would like to see an even larger screen, but I don't think people are quite ready for that . . . yet. ■

Newsline

(Continued from page 25)

through the magic of satellite and cable. Always on the make for innovative programming, they will begin offering a new late-night soap opera, *Network for Working Women* (NWW) by July 1—provided they can garner enough advertising support.

The NWW is intended to be carried on weekday nights from 11:30 to midnight, Eastern Time. In another possible format, NWW might also be carried on the Satellite Program Network cable system from 8 PM to 9 PM weekdays.

The soaps to be offered on NWW include the long-ago canned *Return to Peyton Place* and the cult classic, *Dark Shadows*. The gothic-oriented *Strange Paradise* will also be offered.

If NWW is initially successful, WTBS will originate new female-oriented programming.

CRIME MAY NOT PAY . . . BUT HOW DOES IT DO IN THE RATINGS?

An innovative anti-crime cable television public service program was implemented recently by Warner-Amex Cable of Hampton, Virginia in cooperation with the local police department. The service already has resulted in the arrest and conviction of two suspects.

William Day, Warner-Amex system manager, said one of the suspects was arrested following a profile description on the system's public service channel. "The other fellow," Day reported, "saw himself on our program and immediately left Hampton. He was later picked up in Maryland, extradited back to Hampton, convicted, and sentenced."

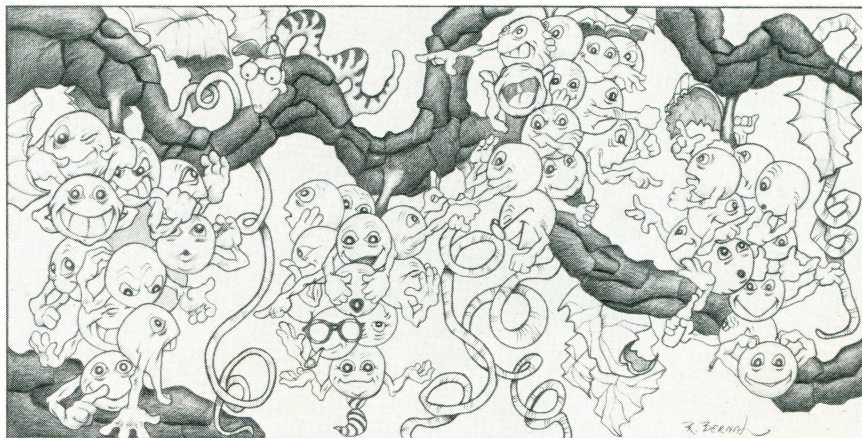
The battle against crime began when Hampton police chief Patrick Minetti met with Day in a meeting concerning the community's crime problems. Day noted, "Chief Minetti and I agreed that we could assist the community in a very constructive way by utilizing the cable system as strong back-up support in the department's campaign to deter crime."

It was decided that Warner-Amex's public service channel would serve on a daily basis to present a full color, seven-minute program that broadcasts mug shots and other pertinent information on wanted lawbreakers. The tape is provided by the Hampton P.D. and is shown five times daily between 10 AM and 10 PM, and is updated constantly to include any new offenders.

The complete modus operandi is given on each of the criminals shown, including names, aliases, identifying marks, habits, and last known address. Cable viewers who might know the whereabouts of the featured felons are able to contact the police through a special phone number.

Day and Chief Minetti are also discussing the production of a "crime watch" program for Warner-Amex. This program would be aimed at exposing con men and others involved in cheating schemes against the public.

Quite a line-up, that.



I'LL DRINK TO THAT!

There is specialty cable programming for the kiddies, for women, for fans of old "B" movies—you name it and there undoubtedly is or will one day be a cable show about it.

The latest entry in the crowded world of cable narrowcasting is for fans of the grape—specifically crushed and fermented grapes. The name of the show is *Wine Country*, from Cable-King Productions. According to producer Richard Johnson, the weekly half hour program is now in production and will soon be ready for dis-

tribution by satellite to cable systems across the land.

Topics covered on the new series will range from interviews with wine tasting experts to location features of vineyard events and all other aspects and news from the wonderful world of wine. Initially, *Wine Country* will concentrate on the wines of California but eventually will move on to comparisons of domestic and imported wines and to recipes using wines.

For openers, an estimated 3,000,000 households will be wired for wine when it debuts on the tube in a couple months. Muscatel drinkers need not subscribe.

AND THIS TIME HE DIDN'T MENTION CHECKERS!

You can come home, Richard Nixon—the people of Columbus, Ohio have forgiven you.

Well, at least the majority of viewers of that city's QUBE system (84% of them to be exact) said they felt "positive" about the former president following QUBE's live coverage of a 30-minute Nixon address at an Ohio State Republican fundraiser.

Questioned over QUBE's interactive system after the speech, 64% of the responding viewers said that there is much that could be learned from Nixon in the area of foreign policy. Asked where the former president could best be used in the politics of today, 40% opined Nixon's knowledge would come in handy as a Presidential advisor.

A total of 57% also stated Nixon should not have resigned, though

60% saw his resignation as an admission of guilt.

Mr. Nixon was not the only prominent Watergate figure to be electronically judged by the people of Columbus.

During a recent live QUBE appearance by G. Gordon Liddy, the former counsel to the Committee to Re-elect the President, viewers of the cable system's *Columbus Alive!* responded to various questions through the system's central computer. This computer provides QUBE with percentage tallies within seconds.

Asked to choose a phrase which best describes Liddy, viewers were shown to have changed their minds on the subject during the course of the show: at program's end, 59% agreed that in another time Liddy would have been regarded as among the "bravest and the best," while only 31% felt this prior to the interview.

Viewers were also asked to name

the most immoral Watergate conspirator—indicted or otherwise—and not too surprisingly, Richard Nixon took the lead with 47% of the vote. He was followed by John Dean (18%), Robert Haldeman (17%), John Ehrlichman (17%), John Mitchell (12%), and Liddy himself with a mere 7%.

In the course of the interview, Liddy stated that politics is a dirty business and 78% of the viewers agreed. And when Liddy stated Richard Nixon will be viewed by history as a competent president, 67% agreed.

After the Liddy appearance, 59% of the viewers said they were bothered by convicted Watergate figures profiting from the incident by writing books. Liddy, incidentally, was in Columbus to promote his book, *Will* (soon to be a TV mini-series starring Robert Conrad). Viewers also registered a 58% agreement that the media did a poor job covering the Watergate affair. And an overwhelming 78% said they believed that if the Nixon tapes had been destroyed, the Watergate scandal would not have toppled the Nixon administration.

DOW JONES AIN'T AVERAGE NO MORE!

Dow Jones, the stock market people and partial owners of Home Link—a cable television company which recently won the Princeton, New Jersey cable franchise—promises to make its new system a “showcase” of the latest cable innovations.

Home Link will offer 110 channels in all, the highest number of channels currently available. Its basic service will take up 35 of those channels at a cost of \$4.00 a month. They will also offer “personalized” packages geared to individual subscribers that will consist of one or more entertainment or sports “tiers,” one or more security channels for fire, burglary, and medical alert, and one or more interactive data access services.

The information options will offer access to such data bases as the Dow Jones’ own stock market quotation service, the local Princeton public library, and the *Princeton Packet* newspaper (part owner of the cable service). Home Link will offer a “black box” and telephone modem for those who want the interactive data options.

COLUMBUS THE GEM OF THE NATION

Columbus, Ohio continues to be the world’s cable showplace, and not only because it has the first two-way interactive cable service (QUBE).

Is it, then, because its three other cable systems must by law also de-

velop two-way capability this year? Or could it be because all four systems now bring city council meetings into subscribers’ homes? Well, it is thanks to all that, plus one more feature: soon, all four systems will be interconnected through a telecommunications center.

Initially this interconnection will provide access to a variety of public hearings and taped and live presentations. The service will also function to connect different institutions through the wires. It has even been suggested that in the future the system could be used for such mundane tasks as meter reading and the management of energy loads.

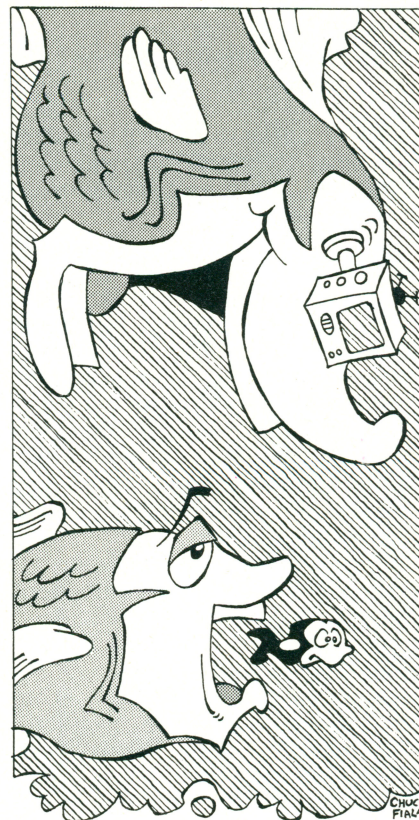
TURNABOUT IS FAIR PLAY

As cable television slowly but surely came into its own in these United States, it had to hurdle some particularly difficult obstacles set in its path by the vested interest groups—i.e. the established local and network broadcasters. Cablers produced a great wailing and gnashing of teeth heard across the country every time the networks or National Association of Broadcasters tried to protect what they saw as *their* fair share of the television pie. Nowhere was the cry louder than in Washington, D.C., especially when the aforementioned interest groups went about this by procedural stalling tactics before governmental bodies and by making anti-cable public pronouncements.

Now that cable is an accomplished fact, it is finding that it is *its* turn to feel the hot breath of yet another alternative system on the back of its neck, and it is finding it is not quite to its liking. So the cablers, through their lobbying and publicity organization, the National Cable Television Association (NCTA), are mimicing their adversaries in an attempt to hinder the development of low-power “mini-station” television systems.

These low-power stations would cover an area roughly the size of a city neighborhood or small town. They do not need the large amounts of storage, sending, and receiving equipment employed by the higher-powered maxi-stations. Though still in the formative stages, these systems are running into heavy opposition from the cablers. They do not necessarily want to shackle the systems entirely, but they would like to see the FCC limit such stations to the UHF band.

While both the FCC and the Justice Department have been making favorable noises about the low-power proposal, the NCTA insists they be limited so as not to interfere with cable



franchises. The NCTA stated that it is greatly concerned by the technological ramifications of the mini-stations, citing possible reception interference caused by the minis to both established UHF signals as well as the television sets of cable subscribers.

JUST HUM ALONG IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE WORDS!

Warner Amex is planning to introduce a 24-hour, all-music cable channel in stereo starting this August 1. To be called MTV (Musical Television), the service will consist primarily of tapes by rock groups and other contemporary musicians.

MTV will be offered free of charge to cable operators since it will be advertiser-supported—that means commercials. Eight commercial minutes are allocated for each hour.

The all-day programming will follow a radio-type format with video disc jockeys providing gossip and general chit-chat between some of the presentations. Also scheduled are live Saturday evening concerts as well as music oriented films and animated features.

BROADCAST

PBS GOES PUBLIC

Several Public Broadcasting System (PBS) series are due to undergo some drastic changes—they are going to be specially crafted to appear on com-

mercial broadcast stations.

Six science specials are being prepared for domestic syndication from the current hit series, *Nova*. The format for these shows will be altered somewhat to allow for commercial interruptions and host segments will be revamped.

Also scheduled for the syndicated route are:

**Julia Child's Television Cookbook* which will use, in addition to material drawn from the famous chef's long-running PBS series, new segments interwoven with the old.

**Evening At The Boston Pops*, will feature 13 hour-long episodes with such guests as Tony Bennett, Burgess Meredith, Pearl Bailey, Judy Collins, Doc Severinson, and others.

**Camera Three*, 13 one-hour episodes from this long-running pot-pourri of everything from the sciences to the arts.

*A trio of musical specials, *Ragtime*, *Geraldine Fitzgerald At Reno*, *Sweeney*, and *Roaring Through the Twenties*.

**Off Your Duff*, a special on physical fitness.

These packages, in addition to PBS' cultural cable channel plans, may well point to another area of potential funding for the financially ailing PBS, a result of government cutbacks in funding for the Corporation of Public Broadcasting.

If the plans for syndication are successful, can a primetime *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* be far behind?

WE'RE GONNA KEEP ON SHOOTIN' HIM DOWN TILL HE STAYS DOWN!

Dallas may be a runaway hit show in the U.S., but it has quickly turned out to be somewhat of a dud over in England. Enthusiasm—not to mention ratings—were quite respectable for the program's first season run in Britain, but its popularity peaked before the beginning of the second season. The show actually lost viewers during the climatic J.R. shooting episode.

This is according to the Jictar rating service, an independent organization which occupies a similar position in British television as Arbitron and Nielsen do here. Jictar reports the show dropped from a high of 20,250,000 viewers to 17,500,000 for the shooting. Since the new season began last November *Dallas* has declined steadily, sometimes even dropping out of its previously secure spot in the top 20.

A more vested interest than Jictar—the British Broadcasting Company, which telecasts *Dallas*—disputes these

findings with statistics of its own. The BBC is basing its higher numbers on 2,000 telephone samples while the rating service relies on 2,000 rating meters in sample households.

Seems J.R.'s about to be shot once again, only this time, it does not look like he will pull through... at least not in Great Britain.

TV GUIDE-ING LIGHT

Though the Corporation for Public Broadcasting is slated for cuts in Federal funding to the tune of \$377 million over the next five years, there is some light at the end of the tunnel.

Walter H. Annenberg, a close friend of the President's and *TV Guide* founder, will help ease the fiscal pain somewhat for the CPB with a \$150 million donation spread over 15 years. The donation will be used for the creation of televised college-level adult education courses so that many adults who cannot attend and/or afford the increasingly higher costs of a higher education can get college credits nonetheless.

The plan calls for this to be accomplished through the participation of local colleges and universities that will allow stay-at-home scholars to enroll in these institutions at reduced tuition. The course curriculum is now being designed and may be ready for broadcast as early as late 1982.

If you miss these televised classes you had better have a note from your TV repairman!

DEPRESSING TELEVISION

Four young Germans committed suicide recently, reportedly after viewing the six part television series, *Death of a Student*. One of the four youths jumped in front of an oncoming train, emulating the method shown in the broadcast.

Death of a Student concerned the last year in the life of a German student who, feeling unwanted by his parents, girlfriend, and teachers, decides to kill himself in the aforementioned manner. The series attracted a large audience: about 12,500,000 out of the estimated 21,000,000 television sets in that country were tuned in. Germany also has the highest teenage suicide rate in Europe, about 800 a year.

Parent and school groups are particularly upset about the program, not only because it was shown at a time that allowed for a large, young audience (successive Sundays at 8:15 PM), but also because the choice of suicide was presented as the student's only alternative to his situation.

SATELLITES

LOOK—UP IN THE SKY . . . OR MAYBE NOT

In March, we reported Comsat, a subsidiary of the Satellite Television Corporation, had petitioned the FCC for permission to launch satellites that would transmit special programming directly to small earth station dish antennas that could be cheaply and easily mounted on homes or apartment buildings. Not surprisingly, this plan has met with heavy opposition, most of it coming from the three networks, the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), the Association of Maximum Service Telecasters, and other organizations with an interest in broadcast television.

They believe the launching of direct broadcast satellites (DBS)—particularly prior to the 1983 meeting of the World Administrative Radio Conference (WARC)—could prove disastrous for the traditional broadcast industry.

The WARC is an important factor in setting broadcast standards the world over: although their decisions are not law, much of what they do winds up in various communications treaties between countries.

ABC's position on Comsat and DBS pretty well sums up the current network orthodoxy: "In ABC's view, any authorization of direct broadcast satellite systems—whether on a permanent or interim basis—would be fundamentally at odds with the structure of local broadcasting embodied in the Communications Act."

CBS agrees, noting any authorization from the FCC "of the type requested by STC would prejudge the outcome of WARC." Over at NBC, feelings are running along the same lines: "A permit for an interim system, for all intents and purposes, would give an interim operator the right to operate a permanent system which would establish *de facto* standards for DBS operations in the U.S."

The nets *et al* also agree it should be up to the Congress to decide the fate of DBS before any permissions—be they temporary or permanent—are issued by the FCC.

Thus far only one thing is certain in the DBS issue—nothing is yet certain.

TV SETS BIG & SMALL

HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE, SOMEWHERE

Despite a sluggish economy, 1980



was a very good year for the manufacturers of color television sets and video cassette recorders.

U.S. year end statistics compiled by the Marketing Services Department of the Electronics Industries Association's Consumer Electronics Group placed 1980 sales of color sets at 10,162,276 units. This 3.2% increase over 1979 figures represents the second highest sales year in television history, placing it slightly behind 1978.

VCRs also recorded landmark sales, with 804,663 machines sold to videophiles nationwide—a whopping 69.3% increase over the numbers for 1979, which stood at 475,396.

RATINGS

YOU MEAN MY MOTHER THE CAR'S GOT A SECOND CHANCE?!

The Big Three Networks ain't what they used to be.

Information has been accumulating to show that the nets are slowly but surely losing their monopoly on the citizenry's tube-time—a.k.a. "market share." A sign of the five-year trend of dissipating audiences for network programming is that CBS is considering lowering the Nielsen rating number—currently around a 28 to 30 share—which designates a show a hit or a flop.

The rating points have been falling from the networks since late 1976—currently a seven percent drop. It points to the fact that more people are watching local independent television stations and cable programming.

CBS vice president for research Arnold Becker, pointing to the cumulative network rating dropping from 93.3% in November, 1978 to 88.5% as of last fall sees the steady decline of network supremacy continuing, "over the course of the next 10 years or so," down to about 75%. According to

Becker, the proverbial bottom line of this trend is, "regardless of what happens this season, one of these days you'll find that programs that otherwise would not be renewed will be renewed. Our definitions of failure and success are going to change."

And so, that seems to indicate, will the quality of what we see on television. Whether that change will be for the better remains to be seen.

TELETEXT

DRAWING A VERTICAL BLANK

Teletext is coming—but it is taking its time. And since the FCC has not yet reached a decision on which of the several available systems will become the standard for a broadcast system in this country, those companies wishing to experiment with teletext are doing it over cable.

Time, Incorporated has picked the Canadian Telidon teletext system to use in their test over one of their cable systems, beginning late this year. Sean McCarthy, director of Time's Video Group Development, stated Telidon was chosen because it "allows the greatest degree of editorial flexibility," as well as "its capacity to produce graphics exceeding the current capabilities of other teletext formats."

Time hopes to end up with a nationwide, 24-hour, seven-day-a-week service for consumers. The system will be sent to participating cable homes through a satellite transponder by way of the television signal's vertical blanking interval. It will have a multi-channel capacity in order to maximize the amount of visual information that can be transmitted to consumers. The service—should it reach fruition—will be partially funded through advertising, but with the main bulk of bucks coming from subscribers.

TESTING, ONE . . . TWO . . . THREE . . .

Time is not the only organization in this country testing teletext systems. As mentioned last month, Field Communications has received the go-ahead from the FCC to conduct a year long trial of the British-created Prestel teletext technology through its Chicago UHF outlet, WFLD-TV (Channel 32) to a limited audience of 100 subscribers. Like the Time, Inc. test, the service will be transmitted through the vertical blanking interval on the channel, though the Field test will be sent out via broadcast signals to descrambler receivers in the test homes.

The CBS experiment in Los Angeles, meanwhile, has begun with the French Antiope system broadcast to special television sets located at public sites. Though the video "magazine" is not totally together, a spokesman for the company notes that the visual information and graphics are coming along nicely. However no "consumer" reaction on the test has come through at press time.

Another teletext trial which recently got underway is one being conducted by New York University's Alternate Media Center and Washington, D.C.'s public television outlet, WETA-TV. Using the Canadian Telidon system, this test employs four lines on the vertical blanking interval. The test signals arrive in 40 households and 10 areas of public access. Users of the joint system currently can call on 100 pages of information.

One difference between this test and the others is that it seeks to determine the type of information sought by consumers rather than merely testing the marketability of Telidon. This service—funded to the tune of nearly \$1,000,000 by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the Department of Education, and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration—uses such resources as *The New York Daily News*, *The Washington Post*, the District of Columbia Public Library, the Smithsonian Institute, and the National Weather Service for its on-screen data. If the first phase of the test receives good reactions, a larger and more extensive phase will be conducted.

In the meantime the Canadian government has sunk an additional \$22.3 million into its domestically developed Telidon technology.

Telidon is becoming increasingly more popular. Times-Mirror Cable TV is planning a two-way Telidon trial in Orange and Los Angeles counties later this year. An initial 200 homes are scheduled to be provided with the system's data retrieval and transaction services there.

Teletext, though suffering through some very traumatic birth-pangs in the U.S., appears to be trying very hard to establish itself in one form or another as a permanent fixture of our daily lives.

GAMES

FIRST PET THE DOG AND THEN KILL THE ALIENS!

Atari game players beware!
The company has warned that the

computer controlled laser cannons on your *Space Invaders* home video game cartridge may turn viciously on you, dashing your hopes of once again saving the galaxy. Atari reports that a small percentage of their game playing computers—about seven percent—returned for defects exhibit a problem caused by static electricity that makes the unit blow their circuitry: this results in, among other problems, the aforementioned continuous laser firing.

Atari attributes the difficulty of the left side of *Space Invaders* (and other games) going into a "constant firing mode" to static resulting from cold weather. Since it is static electricity that causes the microprocessor chips to malfunction, users of home video games—as well as other electronics using solid state technology—should take certain precautions before touching their units. They recommend you avoid placing the game unit directly on carpeting since that increases the static charge on the players and causes problems with the machine.

Atari suggests that consoles be placed on tables or wood floors. Another tactic is to wrap electricians' tape around the controls. And to further lessen wintertime video game angst as well as one's static charge, you might want to touch metal or another creature—your opponent will do if a convenient furry little creature is not around—before settling down to knock off aliens.

PIRACY

GONNA MAKE 'EM WALK THE PLANK, JERRY?

Questar TV Concepts of Dallas, Texas recently took out an ad in a trade publication in an outrageous act of defiance of a new California law. The ad read, in part, "... we've got news for you, Jerry!"—referring to Governor Jerry Brown of the sunshine state and the recent California law which bans the manufacture, distribution or sale of unauthorized equipment intended to pick up over-the-air subscription television signals.

The company is offering schematic designs of the ON-TV descrambler, as well as a parts listing, and variable varactor tuner for \$69.95—slightly more than the charge for the installation of an authorized decoder for ON-TV. Questar also offers individual parts for the decoder itself through the mail from Texas for an additional \$79.95. They say the machinery can

be assembled in about three hours.

As a result, ON-TV and other systems concerned with signal piracy have renewed their call for some sort of federal law to deal with such interstate sales of descrambler equipment. However, in the past such proposed legislation also included outlawing private earth stations for receiving satellite signals. It is believed that helped defeat these measures even before they got out of committee. Anti-piracy forces are currently mulling over various options.

CENSORSHIP

WHO'S WATCHING THE WATCHERS?

The Coalition for Better Television, a pressure group of fundamentalist churches which would like to see less sin and skin on the tube, has been called to task for its boycott of "offending"—in their opinion—sponsors.

The words of chastisement came from James E. Duffy, president of ABC-TV. Duffy is the first television executive to speak out publicly against the group, stating in a speech before the American Advertising Federation that the Coalition is "clearly an attempt at a form of censorship," and that its aim "is an attempt to replace diversity, freedom of choice, and the public judgement with one group's view of what is right and moral for all of us to see and hear."

To underscore his point, Duffy continued, "Make no mistake: what this group seeks to do is to control the content of television and impose its view of morality."

THE FUTURE!

HIGH RESOLUTIONS FOR THE COMING DECADE

CBS is lobbying the policy makers to provide a new block of frequencies for the emerging television technology which is expected to provide wide-screen, high-definition pictures during the coming decade.

The network invited reporters, congressmen, and others to view a private showing of what to expect by 1990. Using Japanese-manufactured cameras which employ a new digital recording process, CBS lobbied for the brighter, crisper large picture technology. CBS is afraid broadcasters will lose out to cable and direct satellite broadcasters unless the government acts to reserve a new block of television channel

frequencies during the upcoming 1983 conference of Western hemisphere countries which will decide such matters.

The high-definition technology is being developed by several companies in various nations. It incorporates more than 1100 lines of resolution in the television picture compared to the 525 line standard presently employed in American broadcasting.

READIN' AND 'RITIN' AND RERUNS

The perennial parental cry of "Turn off the television and do your homework!" is doomed to extinction, all thanks to technology and ABC Video Enterprises.

The folks at the network's video arm have announced a campaign to market a comprehensive elementary school curriculum designed to teach children to watch the tube with more discrimination. The course, "Getting the Most Out of TV," consists of a seven-part series of video cassette—or 16mm film—presentations, each running 12 minutes.

These seven programs center around teaching young people to improve their critical thinking and language skills by understanding the inner workings of the television medium. Among the chapters in the series are:

"The Technical Side of TV," concerning the basics of how television shows are broadcast.

"People Make Programs," explaining how a team of people—from scriptwriters to network executives—work together to plan and produce programming.

"The Magic of TV," focusing on special effects and how they are used to enhance television images; a section of the presentation highlights how to distinguish between fantasy and reality on the tube.

"Commercials," teaching children how to be more informed and discriminating consumers by illustrating various advertising techniques used to coast products in a favorable light.

"Action and Violence," illustrating the distinction between "fantasy action" on entertainment programs and the real-life action on news and sports shows. The manner in which mock violence is staged is shown through demonstrations of fight scenes and break-away props.

The series is available through ABC Wide World of Learning, a subsidiary of ABC Video Enterprises, Incorporated. The course comes with teacher's guides and student workbooks.

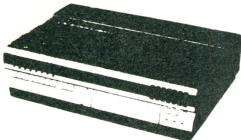
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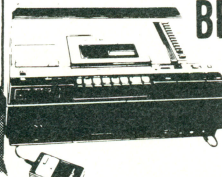
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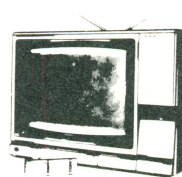
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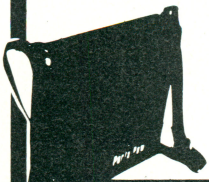
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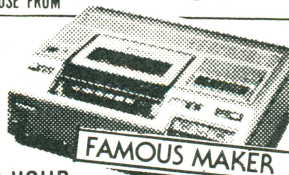
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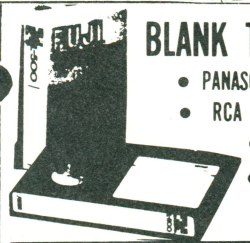
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*Now you can use
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summon the police,
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or ambulance*

By Ann DeLarye

If you could add something to your home that would increase its value and reduce your insurance payments, would you? If this addition could detect fire, burglars, and intrusions, as well as summon help quickly during medical emergencies, would it tempt you to dole out a substantial monthly fee?

The people who run TOCOM, Inc. in Dallas, Texas and Warner Security Systems in Columbus, Ohio are

CABLE TV CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE!

hoping that, for many Americans, the answer is "yes."

"Home security definitely will be a heavyweight revenue producer in the 1980s," claims Bill Geary optimistically. Geary is a Regional Marketing Manager for TOCOM, Inc., a Dallas-based company which manufactures electronic, computer-controlled components, equipment, and central systems for the cable television industry.

TOCOM puts cable companies like ATC (a subsidiary of Time, Inc.), TCI, Cox Cable, Times-Mirror, and Storer into the home security business. TOCOM manufactures the security hardware and software these companies need to install when they wire a new community (or "franchise") for receiving cable television.

Some cable companies develop their own security systems; most notable of these is Warner-Amex.

The Warner Security Systems division offers home security service in conjunction with the much-publicized two-way QUBE operation in Columbus, Ohio. Although Warner's home security operates through the same cable that QUBE uses, it is an entirely separate service.

What is revolutionary about the TOCOM and the Warner security systems is their two-way "interactive" capacity. You, the homeowner or apartment dweller, can get in touch with a central monitoring station when you need help; the people and the computer which run the station there can also contact your home.

An important advantage of this interactive capability is described by Warner Security's senior vice president Miklos Korodi, "For the last hundred years, you were able to buy security systems from lots of alarm companies at relatively high initial prices and monthly rates. What has happened with the two-way interactive technology is that prices have been reduced to a level where *most* people can afford it. And with today's social problems and shortage of police, an alarm is a prerequisite for a home."

You usually do not have to be a cable subscriber in order to receive security installation and service from your local cable company. Your area *does* have to be served by a cable company, but that is the only prerequisite. You do not even need to own a television set in order to be wired for two-way home security, because such systems operate independently of your set.

If you do own a television set and subscribe to cable, a home security set-up comes in from a central monitoring station on the cable already in your home. Between your wall and your television set there is a small device called a "splitter" which acts like a traffic cop. It directs the television signals into the television set and the home security signals into a separate alarm "panel" or "terminal."

From this panel/terminal burglar, fire, duress, and medical emergency alarms are relayed back to the central monitoring station. There "the unique address and the type of alarm problem is expanded into English and jumps up on a screen," according to TOCOM's Geary.

People at the central monitoring station who receive your signal then take steps to determine if your alarm is false or valid, and use speed dialers to dispatch police, firemen, or ambulances.

"Of the messages that come back to the monitoring center 80 to 85% are valid alarm conditions for which there is no emergency," cites Geary of TOCOM's figures. "In the case of a smoke detector, people burn pork chops in the kitchen and set off the smoke detector—the system is working properly, but there is no emergency. Or the alarm system might not be disarmed properly, and the alarm is activated just as if someone blew off the door. So most every alarm is phone-verified."

"The only difference is that in a fire alarm we notify the fire department first; they want to be called right away because there is a certain amount of readiness that has to take place. Then the homeowner is called for verification. In all situations, if there is no answer or a busy signal, help is dispatched."

The Warner Security System works similarly: "Our false alarm ratio is no worse than anyone else's in the alarm industry and I expect a substantial decline," claims Korodi. "Don't forget the first few days in the home are crucial because you have to get used to using the system. If the burglar alarm is triggered, we call the subscriber and ask for his or her identification number. The police are dispatched if the correct number is not given."

Warner, like TOCOM, does not verify a fire alarm first. They dispatch the fire truck and then call the homeowner. If it turns out to be a false alarm, the person at the control station will try to catch the truck before it leaves the fire station.

All this takes place very rapidly, and both companies claim service delay caused by going through a monitoring station is insignificant when compared to the advantage of having an interactive alarm system in the first place.

"We have had instances like the one in which a gentleman needed open heart surgery," Korodi relates. "From the time he had the attack and hit his medical button to the time he was in the hospital emergency room was five to six minutes."

You do not need to be the owner of a single-family home in order to be wired for a cable security system. "If the cable company serves the area, you can wire condominiums, townhouses, apartments," says Geary. "You do not have near the penetration in rentals as you do in condominiums, for obvious reasons—people who buy condos are buying a home and they want to protect it."

"We have had some success with rentals where the building owner

will install it as a marketing amenity. And actually apartments, because of the way they are constructed, can represent a very low-cost kind of installation."

Geary believes planned unit developments and large condominiums are big potential markets for TOCOM's unique IIIC security system. "The IIIC is our most recent system and has the capacity to provide 1,000 homes with alarm terminals. It has been specifically developed for condominiums and planned unit de-

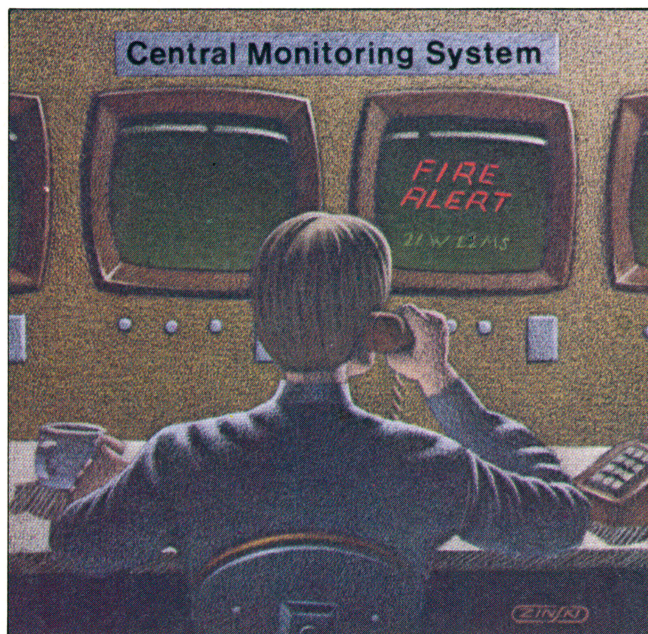


Illustration By John Zielinski

velopments where a developer wants to put in, say, 500 homes. He can operate a self-contained unit with his own monitoring station the same way he would hire a 24-hour guard.

"We are doing a significant amount of condo conversions in more urban areas."

Despite the old insurance pitch that no amount of money is too much to protect your family, the cost of these systems is a significant consideration. Korodi shared approximate costs involved with the Warner system:

"You can get a very nice burglar alarm system anywhere from \$270 on up. You can get a fire alarm for \$200 up. A combination will run you between \$450 and \$600—that would be a small system. Any of these choices includes medical emergency and duress service."

"The average system runs \$950—

costs are set by the number of windows and doors that are fitted with sensors, how many sensors are used, and what type of sensors are used.

"The monthly monitoring fee is between \$12.50 and \$16.50, depending on the size of the system. The monitoring fee covers the operating costs of the central station, which we have staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to monitor incoming alarm signals."

appreciation per year. There would never be any depreciation. It is one of the best investments you can make."

Even so, you ought to know what you are getting for this kind of money.

The burglar alarm, which has already been mentioned, has various kinds of sensors at windows, doors, and other possible home access points. If any of these sensors are disturbed, the alarm is sent to the monitoring station. Of course, you

COM's systems, this horn shuts itself off automatically after five minutes.

A hold-up or duress alarm is like the burglar alarm, but does not trigger the piercing horn—it is silent.

The fire alarm is a smoke detector which is hooked up to your home alarm terminal. This is the same type of smoke alarm you can buy in stores but with special circuits which allow it to be wired to your system.

Both Warner and TOCOM offer three different mechanisms which can be employed for medical emergencies. One is a button on your alarm panel itself. Another is an auxiliary terminal placed elsewhere in your home, such as a bedroom or bathroom.

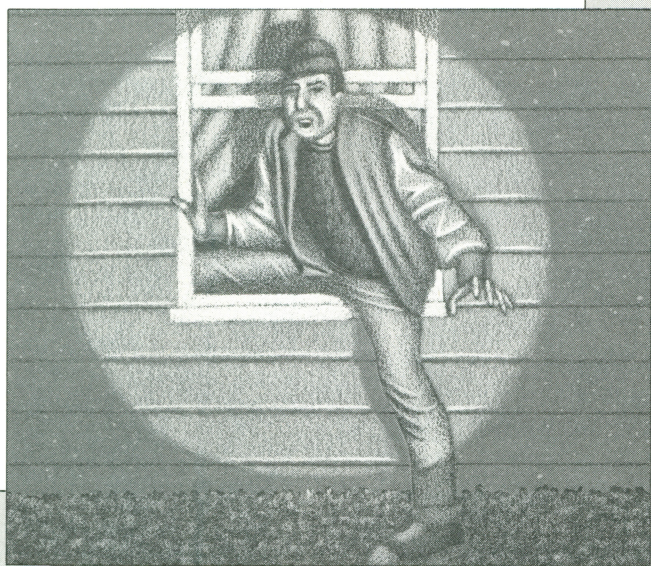
The third is a mobile unit, described by Geary as being "somewhat like a beeper" and by Korodi as "a sophisticated garage-door opener type of mechanism." It works up to 150 feet away from your main terminal whether you are inside or outside of your house. If its button is pushed, radio waves cause the main terminal to relay the emergency medical alarm.

This alarm is particularly useful for older people. "We have the ability to store household information," Geary notes. "When a customer is first signing on as a subscriber, we can ask questions like 'Are there any elderly residents? If so, what is their location—third floor bedroom? Is anyone allergic to penicillin? Does anyone use a wheelchair?' This is the kind of information that is particularly useful to paramedics or firemen, especially when the victim is unconscious."

Cable security systems are not limited to residences—businesses can be wired if they are within the area served by the cable company. Korodi reports smaller businesses in Columbus which previously had been unable to afford the alarm set-ups many bigger companies install are signing on with Warner's system.

"We have a little better than one hundred business customers. Those which have been interested tend to be small businesses like boutiques, delicatessens, beauty parlors, and smaller drug and liquor stores.

"One of our customers, who happens to have a small jewelry store which he runs out of his home, had two people who came in to sell him something. While he was transacting the sale, they pulled a gun and tried to rob him. They actually shot him in the head, and they were just about to finish him off when he hit the medical emergency and burglar alarm. The



Korodi points out there are three ways in which this money can be recovered by the security subscriber. If your home already has a security system, your system's sensors can be connected to the Warner home terminal. Korodi estimates 99% of pre-existing security set-ups are usable with minor upgrading.

Secondly, Korodi reports, most of the people in the Columbus area who have hooked into the Warner Security system have received a 10% reduction in their insurance costs, which takes a small edge off the monitoring fee.

Finally, Korodi claims such an installation is actually a home improvement. "Do not forget it becomes an asset in your home," he claims. "Most people make money on the system when they sell their home. With the cost of labor and materials, it is conceivable you could take 20%

are given a way to deactivate the system so you can enter your own residence.

In Warner's system, "To deactivate the burglar alarm upon entering your home," Korodi explains, "you have a digital pad with your own code. You punch that code and it deactivates the alarm system. You can change it to any number you want—say you have a baby sitter and you do not want to give out the master code, so you give her a secondary code which is temporary."

After activating the alarm when you leave, you are given a certain number of seconds to get out of your home before you set off an alarm.

If the sensors detect an intruder, the alarm goes to the monitoring station, and at the same time a piercing horn will warn the intruder he/she has been detected. In TO-

siren went off and it saved the day. I do not know if they captured the people, but his life was saved—he is up and running around.”

As advanced as interactive security systems may be in the technical sense, they are only as good as their human back-up—the police, firemen, and paramedics who answer the alarms.

Talking to Bill Taylor, an officer with the crime prevention unit of the Columbus, Ohio police department, a very different perspective of home security systems comes through.

According to Taylor, the police do not like alarm systems in general. False alarms are a problem which waste time and manpower for any police force in any community.

The Warner Security system has not noticeably increased police workload, Taylor estimates, indicating false alarms through the Warner system have not been a sizeable problem.

Taylor reminds us the Warner system is only one of many types of systems presently operating in the Columbus area. Although Warner's system has the unique advantage of signal transmission through a coaxial cable instead of a telephone, Taylor would not commit himself to touting its virtues beyond noting that Warner's was not as slow as some.

Because alarms are filtered through the central monitoring station, Geary believes, police and fire authorities are protected from much of the hassle of answering false alarms. “The police and fire people are most often skeptical at first, but after a while they realize this buffering saves them a lot of running around.

“You have heard the horror stories about people who install these hair-trigger systems, then while they are out of town the horn starts to blow and the police have to try to get into the home to turn it off. Or worse yet, the system is wired directly into the police station by a telephone dialer. The authorities are starting to appreciate the value of a monitored system.”

As might be expected, both Geary and Korodi believe there are few circumstances under which interactive security systems will fail. As Korodi outlines it, Warner Security “has redundancies built into the system. For instance, there is a back-up battery in there which will power your system for 24 to 72 hours in case of blackout.

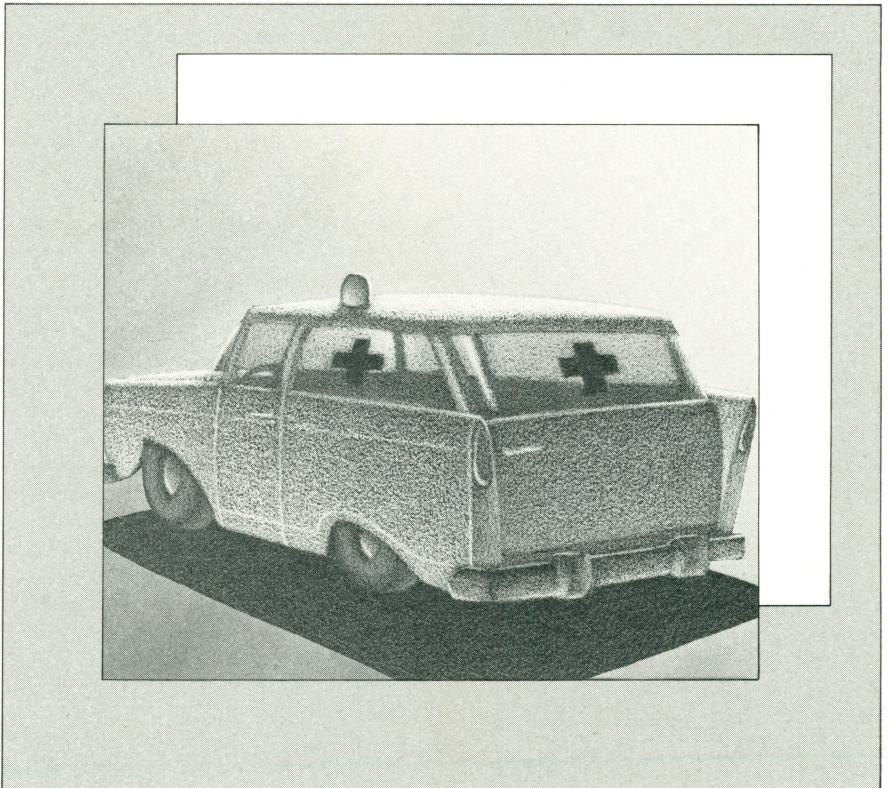
“Or say the cable is cut. The home terminal automatically switches over to a second format connected to

“From the time he had the heart attack and hit his medical alarm button to the time he was in the hospital emergency room was five to six minutes.”

your existing telephone line. The terminal then transmits any alarm signals via the telephone line rather than the cable. If this is the case, the mechanism is sophisticated enough that if you happen to be talking on the phone and a medical alert is triggered, it will disconnect you, transmit the emergency signal to the central station and put your call

effective whether you are home or away—in fact the security system *does not know* whether you are there or not. If you arm the system and go to bed, the fact that you are still there makes no difference. All it knows is the system is armed.

“I would say your garbage man has a greater chance of learning more about you than your cable



back on again.”

But what happens if you fall behind or fail to pay your monthly fee?

“If a person falls behind on their payments, we send them a notice,” Korodi explains. “If we do not get a response within ‘X’ number of days, we send out another notice by registered mail advising the individual that we are disconnecting before the service is shut off. We also advise their insurance company.” Poof! No more security.

If that sounds a bit Big Brother-ish to you, many within the cable industry would rush to convince you otherwise. Although the system is interactive and your home is monitored by a computer, “There’s not a great deal to be concerned about,” Geary reassures. “There is nobody literally looking into your home. There is no camera on the alarm panel.

“The security system is just as

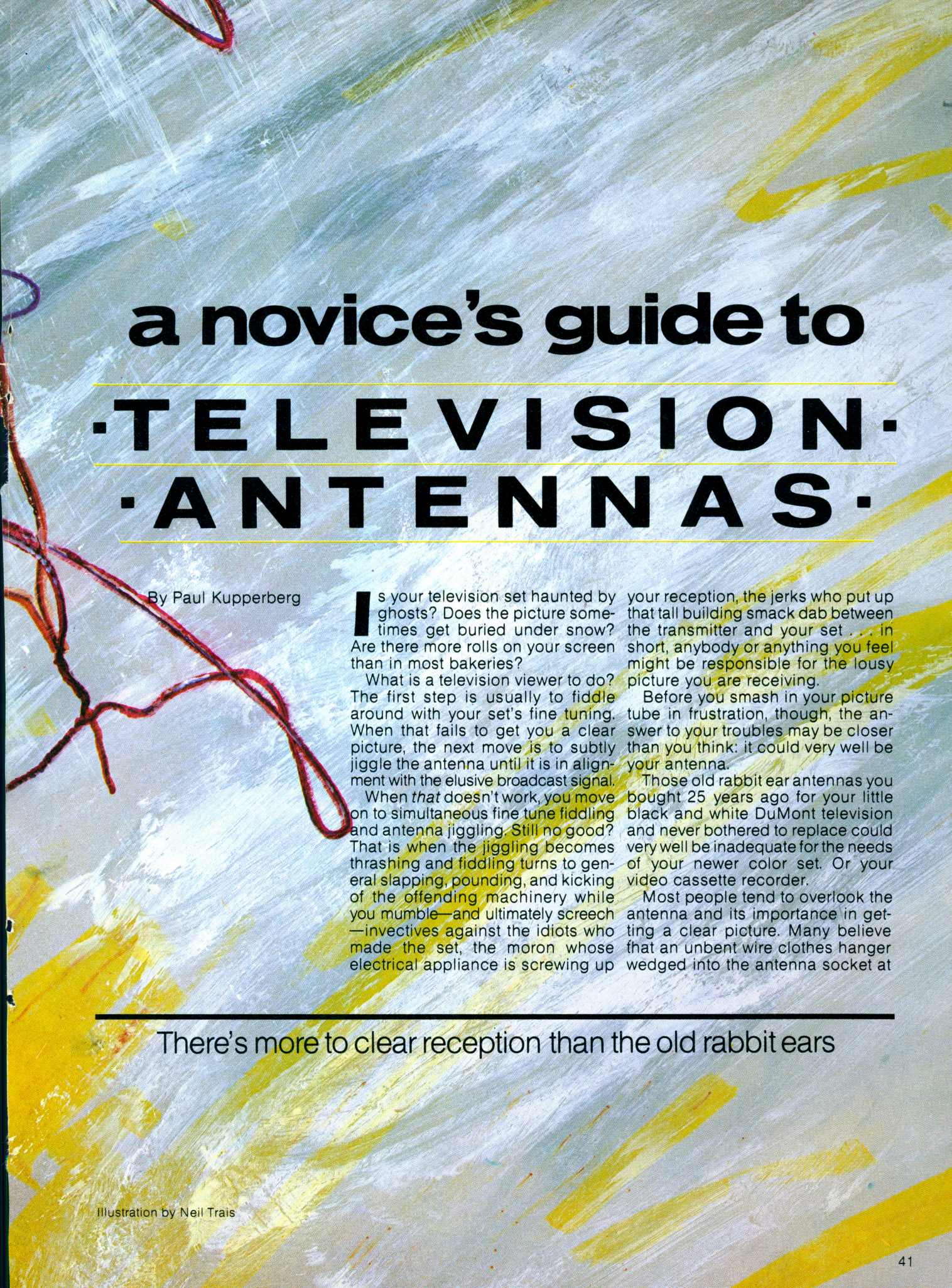
company does, and I am being very serious.”

Of course, you do not *have* to order such systems along with your cable fare. Then again, you might want to hassle your local cable company into providing such service. An interactive cable security system can be seen as expensive—unless one day you need to use it.

It is quite conceivable non-entertainment types of cable services, especially home security, will be big money-makers in the coming decade. Some industry people even dare to believe such services will outstrip entertainment in revenues once the dust has settled over a wired America.

By 1984, parents may be telling their sons and daughters to build their futures on the paranoia of the people—and thus steer them into very lucrative careers. ■





a novice's guide to ·TELEVISION· ·ANTENNAS·

By Paul Kupperberg

Is your television set haunted by ghosts? Does the picture sometimes get buried under snow? Are there more rolls on your screen than in most bakeries?

What is a television viewer to do? The first step is usually to fiddle around with your set's fine tuning. When that fails to get you a clear picture, the next move is to subtly jiggle the antenna until it is in alignment with the elusive broadcast signal.

When *that* doesn't work, you move on to simultaneous fine tune fiddling and antenna jiggling. Still no good? That is when the jiggling becomes thrashing and fiddling turns to general slapping, pounding, and kicking of the offending machinery while you mumble—and ultimately screech—invectives against the idiots who made the set, the moron whose electrical appliance is screwing up

your reception, the jerks who put up that tall building smack dab between the transmitter and your set . . . in short, anybody or anything you feel might be responsible for the lousy picture you are receiving.

Before you smash in your picture tube in frustration, though, the answer to your troubles may be closer than you think: it could very well be your antenna.

Those old rabbit ear antennas you bought 25 years ago for your little black and white DuMont television and never bothered to replace could very well be inadequate for the needs of your newer color set. Or your video cassette recorder.

Most people tend to overlook the antenna and its importance in getting a clear picture. Many believe that an unbent wire clothes hanger wedged into the antenna socket at

There's more to clear reception than the old rabbit ears

the back of their sets will do the same job as one of those contraptions with all the dials and switches and lethal looking doohickeys growing out of it. Perhaps this is true in theory, but when it comes time to plant yourself before the tube for an evening of heavy television watching, the difference is as noticeable as the snow on your screen.

The antenna is, after all, the thing that draws the broadcast signals from the air and allows your television to throw up the picture on the screen. But depending on whether you live in a city or suburb, a house or apartment, are near sources of signal interference, have a direct line of sight between transmitter and receiver, or own a VCR, you will have different antenna needs to get the performance you require.

A recent study conducted by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) shows how much most television viewers underestimate the importance of having the right antenna. The average person is quick to cast the blame for bad reception on the television stations and manufacturers, calling on them to do something about picture quality and reception. But, the FCC study concluded, better antennas in the home would improve that quality better and faster than anything they could do at the manufacture or broadcast end.

But how are we supposed to know which antenna suits our individual needs? Well, the FCC thinks it would be nice if broadcasters and set distributors educated the consumer in this area. They would like to see new set buyers provided with booklets outlining which antennas work best with which sets under what circumstances. But failing the immediate and magical appearance of such a booklet in your hands, you will have to ask around.

If you are soon to be purchasing a new set, make sure you ask your retailer for this information. Do not be afraid to pick his brains. After all, you are making a major investment in your new TV—especially if you are buying a color set—and there is no reason whatsoever for you to settle for anything less than peak performance.

Most experts I consulted agreed that the standard rabbit ear antennas that come on most sets are inadequate for the job they have to do. Nor are you much better off with a separate indoor antenna that sits atop the television. "The signal strength of the rabbit ears is strong enough," a salesman at Radio Shack said, "but they do not have a good

Those old rabbit ear antennas you bought 25 years ago for your black and white DuMont television and never bothered to replace could very well be inadequate for the needs of your new color set.

enough front-to-back rejection ratio. That's what is important to your reception."

What that means is that while rabbit ear antennas are usually able to pick up enough of the signal for a good picture, they are unable to retain that signal long enough to hold the picture steady and clear.

Of course, if you live in the middle of a city you are fighting an uphill battle all the way. While broadcast signals travel in straight lines through even solid objects, they are able to be deflected by tall buildings or large bodies of water. Should your home be located in one of these areas of deflection, you are out of luck. If the signal is not reaching your antenna, it does not matter how good it is. No signal or low signal means no picture or poor picture quality.

If you are in one of these areas, check into the availability of cable television. Cable was originally installed in many locales because conventional antennas were unable to pull in an adequate signal. Though there have been many advances in cable, especially in programming, it is still used for that very purpose in many remote areas.

Another solution—albeit an expensive one—is to have installed your own satellite Earth station, a dish antenna. These sit in your backyard and receive broadcast signals directly from the transmitting satellites which are in geostationary orbit in space. While the reception you will get will be very good, the experts say that you need at least an acre of land

on which to place your antenna, a clear southern exposure, and anywhere from \$7,000 and upwards to pay for it.

Another cause of interference that you and your antenna have little or no control over is electrical appliances. All it takes is a neighbor with a blender or citizen's band radio to ruin your viewing pleasure. "Appliances, CB'ers, fluorescent lights, even an idling car engine near your home or apartment will do something to your television reception," our man at Radio Shack notes. What can you do to combat this?

"Hope your neighbors are understanding and will agree to limit the times they use their appliances," he said. "The interference comes in directly through the power lines in the building. You can try a line interference filter, and it *might* cut down on the problem a little, but it's not going to eliminate it altogether. Nothing will.

"Home computers used to be a really big problem," he adds. "If your neighbor owns a model manufactured before this year, then you are in for some heavy, heavy interference. Most computers will almost completely step on your TV signal and make your set useless." Models sold after January 1 of this year, he assured us, must meet more stringent interference standards set by the FCC. On the negative side, there are something like 200,000 pre-1981 home computers out there screwing up TV reception across the nation.

Nor, as noted before, are the fancier dial-, switch-, and paraphanelia-laden rabbit ears going to be much help with standard receiving problems. One Chicago television dealer dismisses these *Star Wars*-like contraptions: "It's the two poles that count, the wire antennas. That and the number of diodes in the antenna's fine tuning." The rest, he says, is for show.

So what is the poor television viewer to do?

"Your best bet is a large and powerful rooftop antenna," I was told at Radio Shack. "It doesn't matter whether you live in the city or suburbs: the more powerful the antenna and the higher the front-to-back rejection ratio, the better the signal you are going to be pulling in."

What about apartment dwellers who are unable to gain access or permission to put up a roof antenna?

"The only thing I can recommend to them is to move their TV around to various parts of the apartment and try to find a convenient spot that gets the best reception with the

new wires

So all television antennas are alike.

Well, yes . . . and no. While it is true one antenna serves pretty much the same function as another, they do vary a bit in such important areas as signal strength and front-to-back ratio. And there are some antennas on the market today that, while not necessarily *better* than the rest, are at least different.

Harada Industries of America offers a bit of a difference in its Clear Channel series of indoor antennas. The top of the Harada line is the Clear Channel CC-400 which features such standard equipment as twin telescoping VHF dipole antennas, a UHF loop, and a 12 position fine tuning knob. What makes the 400 different is its power booster and LED digital clock. The booster gives this set of rabbit ears a slightly better kick for a clearer picture. The clock also features a 24-hour automatic on-off timer, allowing you to have your set turn on or off

whenever you want without having to touch a thing. It retails for \$79.95.

Also in the Harada line are the CC-300 and CC-200, both indoor UHF/VHF/FM antennas. The 300, which retails for \$61.95, also has the power booster found in the 400 for a stronger picture signal. The CC-200 is a set of plain rabbit ears selling for a suggested \$13.95, although the folks at Clear Channel assure me that it delivers the performance needed for a quality picture.

RCA manufactures and distributes two unique antennas for both home and travel. The RCA 5MS440 Mini-State Antenna is made for indoor or outdoor use in the home. It features a 21-inch diameter rotating antenna system with a remote controlled electric rotor for easy fine tuning. To keep wear and tear of moving parts down, the RCA antenna's motor is inside a shielded casing which keeps the exterior parts of the unit stationary while the interior

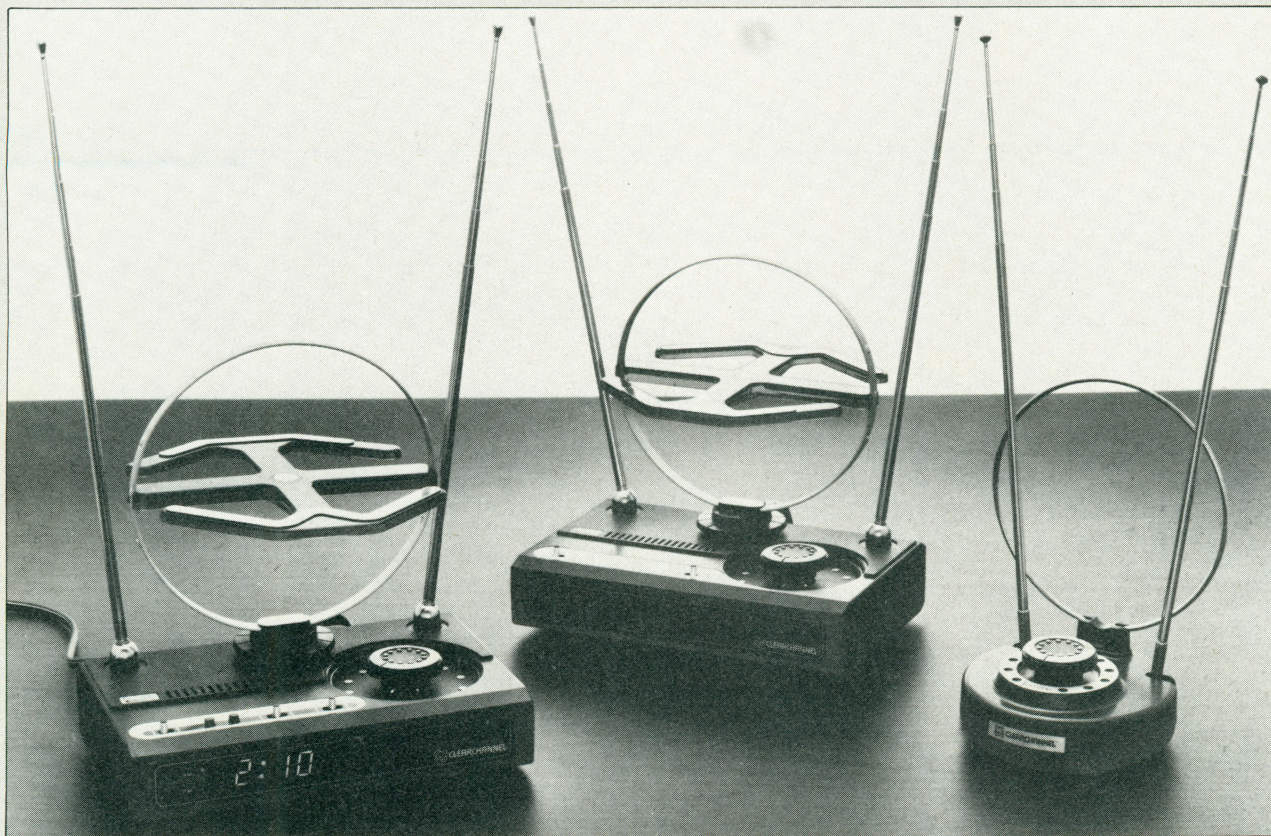
mechanisms are at work. The 5MS440 also features a traveling VHF broad band antenna with a built-in amplifier and a corner reflector for UHF, and retails for \$103.95.

The RCA 5MS550 is pretty much the same as the 5MS440 in features, but this one is made specially for use in RVs or boats. The only thing the \$115.50 5MS550 has that its home use counterpart lacks is a stainless steel construction for standing up to the sea air and life on the road, and an AC/DC power capacity.

Sony markets the AN57 Ground Plane Antenna, a light-weight UHF/VHF/FM antenna. This \$135 outdoor device allows you to split your signal three ways and is omni-directional, which means that it will draw in signals from all around and does not require fine tuning like a uni-directional unit.

Still, special features should not be the only reason you choose a specific antenna for your television. While a digital timer is certainly a nice thing to have, it is useless to you if the antenna it is attached to cannot produce a good picture. Remember—in television viewing, the picture is the thing.

P.K.



rabbit ears. Either that or move."

How big is big enough? Our salesman says the bigger the better, even for residents of large cities: "I advise people to install a VU-160 rooftop antenna for best results. That's good for about a 160 mile radius from the transmitter. It is a more powerful signal strength than you need in the city so close to the transmitters, but it does give you the better front-to-back ratio.

"I suggest you *start* with the more powerful antenna and then step down the signal strength with an attenuator. That way you have enough power to reject bounced signals that cause ghosts."

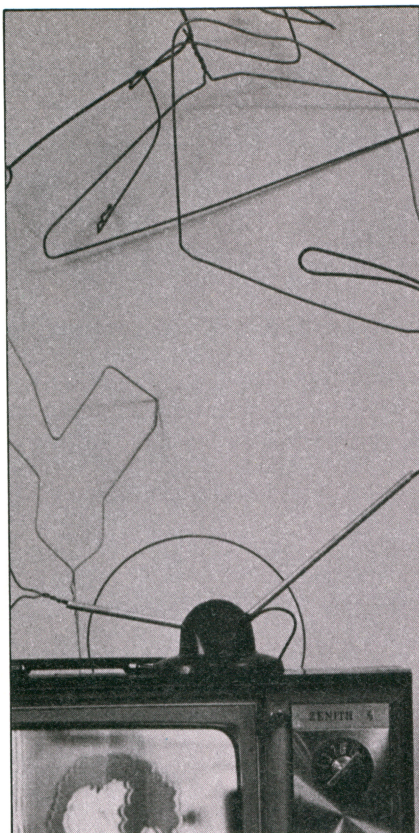
The Chicago television salesman disagrees: "That big an antenna in the city is overkill. The closer you are to the broadcast transmitter, the weaker the antenna you need."

One thing both men agree on, however, is that regardless of signal strength, the only wire that should be used to connect antenna to television is shielded coaxial cable. The shielding on coax helps block out some annoying outside electrical interference that could break up your picture, and it also carries a stronger signal a further distance from the roof to the television. In television reception, every little bit helps. The heavy coax, by the way, will also weather the elements longer than flat antenna cables, and it will stay steadier in high winds. A swaying antenna cable could lead to a disruption in the signal.

Though the choice of which rooftop antenna you need may puzzle you, its installation is far simpler than you may think, unless you happen to suffer from acrophobia. Most antennas come with the necessary hardware for roof mounting, usually a set of brackets to attach the antenna pole to a chimney. If no smokestack is handy, tripods are available at most hardware and electronics stores for standing the antenna on the roof.

The tripod is bolted to the roof, the antenna secured in the brackets, coaxial cable is run to your television set, and you are set for clearer television reception. Guy wires may be necessary to steady taller poles, and your antenna should be made as secure as possible—an antenna waving in the wind results in jumpy reception.

There are thousands of antennas on the market from scores of manufacturers and distributors. "As far as rabbit ears go," the TV dealer told me, "one is pretty much as good as the next as long as it has large



enough poles and a good fine tuner.

"Besides, it is difficult to recommend any particular antenna as the best, even rooftop models. The antenna you buy depends on what you need. You've got to take into account your location, your set, and any special needs, like video cassette recorders." For over-the-air recording a good antenna is mandatory: the VCR records the signal directly off the television's antenna leads, so what you see on the screen is what will be on the tape—snow and all.

For those in particularly poor areas of reception an antenna rotor might be called for. These small motors attach to the antenna on the roof and allow you to rotate the whole set-up with an indoor control to catch the strongest signal.

Listed below are just some of the indoor and outdoor antennas on the market. Though it will not tell you about every antenna, it will give you a general idea of the types available. So read on—and clear reception to you:

Archer Color Supreme II VU-75, VU-90, VU-120, and VU-160: These outdoor roofmount antennas are available from Radio Shack. They all feature gold alodized elements for long life, 60° VHF elements in triangular alignment to aid signal pick-up and transfer, VHF, UHF, and FM reception, separate signal split-

ter, and they come preassembled. The numbers stand for the antennas' estimated range in miles, and they retail for between \$27 and \$70.

Archer Color Eagle II V-60, V-110, V-150, and V-185: Also from Radio Shack, the Color Eagle II series of outdoor antennas features many of the same design features of the Color Supreme II models. This series was designed especially for VHF channels two through 13 and 88-108 MHz FM stereo or mono. The suggested retail prices range from \$11.95 to \$59.95.

Corner-Reflector Yagi U-100 and U-75: Radio Shack's roof antennas engineered for UHF channels 14 through 83. \$16.95 and \$23.95 suggested retail.

Color Supreme II Deluxe UHF/VHF/FM: An indoor antenna with both the straight VHF antenna poles and squared elements for UHF which rotate for the best signal.

Winegard DR-1000, DR-2000, DR-3000, DR-4000, DR-5000, DR-6000: The line of Winegard Television Systems' UHF/VHF rabbit ear antennas. Each features double outer UHF loops, rotatable inner UHF loop (in the 5000 and 6000), 12 or six position switch, and a UHF-VHF slide switch in the 6000 model. They retail for between \$13.95 and \$34.95.

Winegard PB-10 and PB-30: The PB-30 features VHF and FM poles and a UHF loop with a six position switch. The smaller PB-10 is for VHF and FM only. They retail at \$3.50 and \$9.95.

Gemini J Series VHF/UHF/FM: The top of the J line is the J-51, with a wedge design made up of 51 elements, Corner Reflector UHF, and an approximate 200 mile range for VHF. The smaller J-35, J-19, and J-13 all feature swept wing VHF and Corner Reflector UHF with ranges of between 80 and 180 miles for VHF.

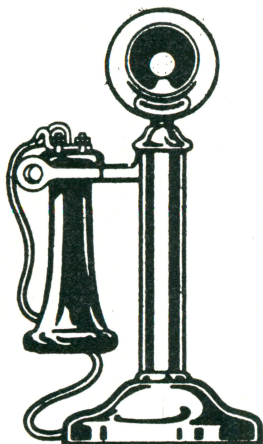
Gemini X Series VHF/UHF/FM: The X series consist of the X-15, X-13, and X-9, all with cross phased design for ranges of 40 to 90 miles in VHF.

Gemini Model 1483: An outdoor UHF antenna with four bay Bowtie with large reflector screen for a 65 mile range.

Gemini Gem-10, -20, -30, -40, -50, and -60: Indoor VHF/UHF/FM rabbit ears, featuring solid brass dipoles for VHF and double or single UHF loops, with 12 or six switch positions, and, in the top models, 180° rotatable loops. ■

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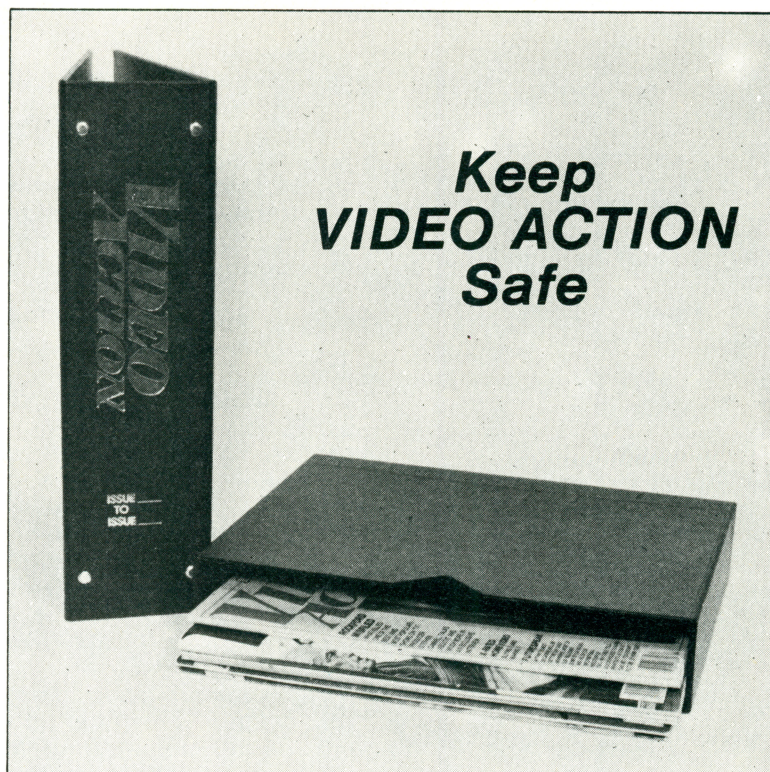
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VIDEOTAPE VS VIDEODISC rivalry or harmony in prerecorded home video?

Interviews by T.B. Martin

The MCA conglomerate currently has the greatest commitment of any company to the videodisc field. A joint owner of the laser/optical process and the Discovision label, MCA also markets discs through its MCA Videodisc, Inc. subsidiary. The company is truly riding the crest of the small but growing videodisc wave.

MCA also has gone full-steam into the prerecorded video cassette field through MCA Videocassette, Inc. A latecomer to this field, MCA was in fact an early impediment to the growth of the video cassette market. MCA, along with Walt Disney Productions, sued the Sony Corporation and tried to enjoin it from selling its original Betamax units on the American market. Though they initially lost in this endeavor, MCA did not release any software for VCRs until relatively recently. The company did begin to release videodiscs a couple years back to the several test markets that were selling the original laser/optical disc players.

But now the company is in both ends of the homevideo software field, an interesting position to say the least. It is, in fact, the only company at present marketing both videodiscs and video cassettes. Another aspect of MCA which bears mention is Universal Pictures, the leading supplier of prime time television programming, whose trove of feature films its sister companies are beginning to supply to the home market.

To gain the company's perspective on the present and future trends in home video, VIDEO ACTION recently interviewed two of its key executives: Gene Giaquinto, president of MCA Videocassette, Inc., and Bud O'Shea vice-president in charge of marketing for MCA Videodisc, Inc. Mr. Giaquinto is also president of Universal Pay Television and director of non-theatrical sales for Universal; he has worked for the company in various other capacities for 21 years. Before coming to MCA, Mr. O'Shea worked for Infinity Records, CBS Records, Capitol Records, and the Beatles' Apple label.

V I D E O T A P E

Gene Giaquinto: *video cassettes*

Video Action: How is the video cassette business lately?

Giaquinto: We have just had an *excellent* year. And I think we have learned a lot. I can see a great deal of things in the market place that will definitely be changing.

VA: Such as?

Giaquinto: The whole area of rentals. Right now, MCA has no established rental policy, but we are in the process of developing one. I recently made a deal with Fotomat, though, for them to rent MCA video cassettes.

VA: The folks over at Magnetic Video are quite upset with Fotomat's policy of renting their products without prior agreement. I believe that Magnetic Video has even begun legal proceedings against Fotomat.

Giaquinto: Well, they're very upset but I don't think there is anything they will be able to do about it. I think we are being realistic in dealing with Fotomat. We made what I consider to be a fair deal.

VA: What do you think of the Walt Disney Home Video rental system where they have specific cassettes marked "For Sale Only" or "For Rental Only?"

Giaquinto: That is a very difficult system to monitor. I don't see how it will work effectively. What happens when someone buys a "sale" cassette and he sells it to the *next* subdistributor and then he starts renting it out? From a practical standpoint you have a hard time controlling and monitoring that type of system. Columbia tried something similar and now they have pulled out of it totally.

VA: RCA's Herb Schlosser said all the large film libraries will be exhausted in the next few years if things continue like they have in the home video field.

Giaquinto: That's not true. We have not begun to even scratch the surface of *available* titles.

VA: Well the point is that you are going to have to get into producing and marketing original programming for home video at some point, and in a big way. Feature films will not hold the market in prerecorded cassettes indefinitely, particularly with the advent of videodiscs.

Giaquinto: We will unquestionably have to start a large-scale program of original productions for the home

video market. We already have some product like that now. But we will not be doing it in a big way until more people own the machinery. Even then, I think most people will be using the machine for time-sharing—you know, to tape *Dallas* when they're not at home. Now, you do not have too many people buying that many prerecorded cassettes. Over 50 percent of VCR owners have their machines almost exclusively for time-sharing.

VA: Do you think that videodiscs, in whatever format, will substantially eat into the prerecorded video cassette market? In this sense, isn't MCA competing against itself?

Giaquinto: Well... yes, but there are some possible ways the prerecorded market could, and probably *will* go. Video cassettes will hold their own, if only through rentals. But I see the prices coming down too.

VA: The prices of prerecorded video cassettes?

Giaquinto: Yes, both blank and prerecorded. As the market expands you will see the prices coming down substantially.

VA: But you do not see a burgeoning videodisc market affecting the sales of prerecorded video cassettes?

Giaquinto: I think the disc market is going to take time to form itself. We're going to be seeing at least three formats, each incompatible with the others. Consumer acceptance and education will take time. I see the disc market being enormous, but that will be a number of years away.

VA: How long away?

Giaquinto: Three or four years. It is going to take time. But I really do not think the discs will take away the prerecorded cassette market. It may *change* it a bit but not in any way that it isn't starting to change already.

VA: You mean rentals?

Giaquinto: Right.

VA: So rentals are the wave of the future?

Giaquinto: Definitely.

VA: Will rentals account for over 50 percent of the market?

Giaquinto: Yes.

VA: Over 75 percent?

Giaquinto: In time, yes.

VA: Do you see the day when you might phase out your video cassette sales and go exclusively to rental?

Giaquinto: No. Keep in mind what I said: the sales prices will come down. People will be both buying and renting. I see the price of prerecorded cassettes going down, in three years or so, to around \$35.

V I D E O D I S C S

Bud O'Shea: videodiscs

Video Action: Proponents of the capacitance videodisc system, RCA particularly, will be trying to overwhelm the public with their format in the coming year. Their catalogue of software is pretty extensive, larger in fact than what is currently available in the laser/optical format. Do you think this will give their system a competitive advantage?

O'Shea: Well, their titles are just now available and we have not started competing in a big way yet. The problem is that we do not have a real market at this time. Everyone is just beginning to feel their way around. No, to answer your question, I do not think that all the titles that are available from RCA will give them an advantage because we are able to match them title-for-title. They really do not have that much more product than we do.

VA: You are now marketing one hour per side extended play videodiscs. The main drawback as I see it is that with extended play discs, some of the disc player's special effects cannot be used on them. Since the laser format's special effects are a major selling point for both the hardware and the software, I am wondering if you will be marketing your titles in the two different modes—"regular" play and extended play—so people will have a choice.

O'Shea: Almost all our feature films are now in the extended play format. It is true that you can't freeze frame or put them in slow motion. If there is a strong consumer demand for both modes, then we will supply both modes but we presently have no plans to put out different versions of the same title.

VA: There is a price differential between the optical and capacitance players—about \$250—with the optical system being the more expensive. Do you think that this difference will affect the sale of discs?

O'Shea: At this point I do not think that it will hurt us. You see, we are not dealing with mass consumers right now, we are dealing with gadget freaks. The masses of people do not yet feel a great need to own a VCR or videodisc player. Particularly with the discs, people are just beginning to learn about them. Even with the state of the economy today, \$250 does not mean *that* much to someone who wants quality

technology. Besides that, if the price differential is shown to be a factor in consumer decision, you'll see the optical system manufacturers coming out with machines priced to compete with the capacitance systems. But I don't see, right now at least, that the higher price of the laser/optical players will affect the sales of discs.

VA: We've heard that MCA has had some problems with quality control. One estimate is that about 10 percent of your product has been returned with defects.

O'Shea: Yes, we have had some problems in this area. Keep in mind, though, that we do not actually manufacture the discs ourselves. We buy the discs from a facility. We do own half the facility, and IBM owns the other half, but we really do not have much to do with the actual manufacturing process. Our defective rate is well below 10 percent, now, and dropping

"One thing the laser optical disc has that tape never will have is that it is extremely durable. It will last forever."

drastically. There is a tremendous amount of research and development in the area of automated, computerized quality control and it is having an effect. Some of the problems we have encountered—like sticking or jumping—have been caused by the players themselves, but people have blamed the discs. But both Pioneer and Magnavox have modified their equipment to make them more tolerant and error resistant. In the last six months our quality control has resulted in a decrease in returns.

VA: In the future, when there is a much larger market for videodiscs, will we see discounting from suggested retail prices like we see with audio recordings?

O'Shea: I really can't say. It will depend on the economy. You cannot make only two or three percent profit on a product and turn around and pay 20 percent on a bank loan. There are presently too many intangible aspects in the business to be able to state categorically one way or the other if videodisc prices will fluctuate from

store to store. Right now video software is a "high ticket" area and retailers will have to use sound business judgement if they want to survive.

VA: Do you see discs becoming rental items? Prerecorded video cassettes are quickly moving into the rental area. In fact, one of your colleagues mentioned that maybe 70 percent of the cassette market could end up in rentals in the next year or so. Will discs follow?

O'Shea: I don't think disc rentals will be that big. The price of cassettes lends them to rental because they are relatively expensive to own but cheap to rent. A disc does not have the same cost as a cassette, so the rental fee would have to be proportionately lower. I do not think that enough of a profit would result. The cost of administering a rental program is expensive, probably prohibitively expensive, so I really do not see widespread disc rental in the future.

VA: Do you think that discs and prerecorded video cassettes will be competing in the future?

O'Shea: No, I think they will exist side-by-side.

VA: Presuming some people will end up with both disc players and video cassette recorders, why would they buy a more expensive cassette version of a movie when they could have a cheaper version in disc with better visual and audio quality?

O'Shea: Again, we really do not know what the market will be like when it reaches the mass consumer level. New technologies—like high-speed cassette duplication—could bring down tape prices to \$30 or so. Stereo video cassettes are just around the corner. There could be some competition between prerecorded tapes and videodiscs. One thing the optical disc has that tape never will have is that it is extremely durable. It will last forever. And the cost of discs could conceivably come down in the years ahead.

VA: Does MCA have any plans to produce its own programming for discs or will you continue to market just feature films?

O'Shea: We already have some of our own programming on the market, a football disc. We have several others in the works, interactive types of presentations, and we will continue to produce our own programming for the home video market. ■

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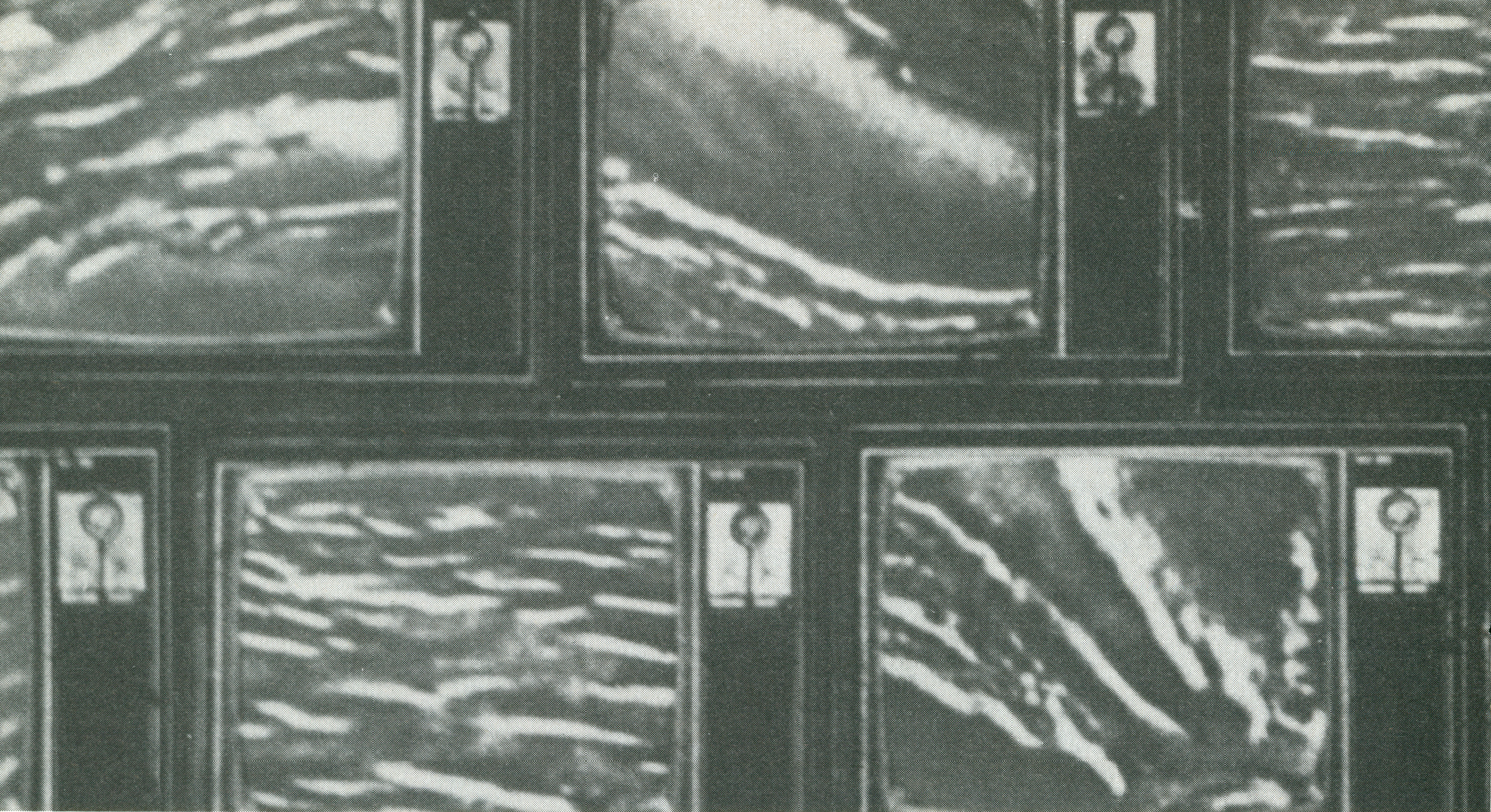
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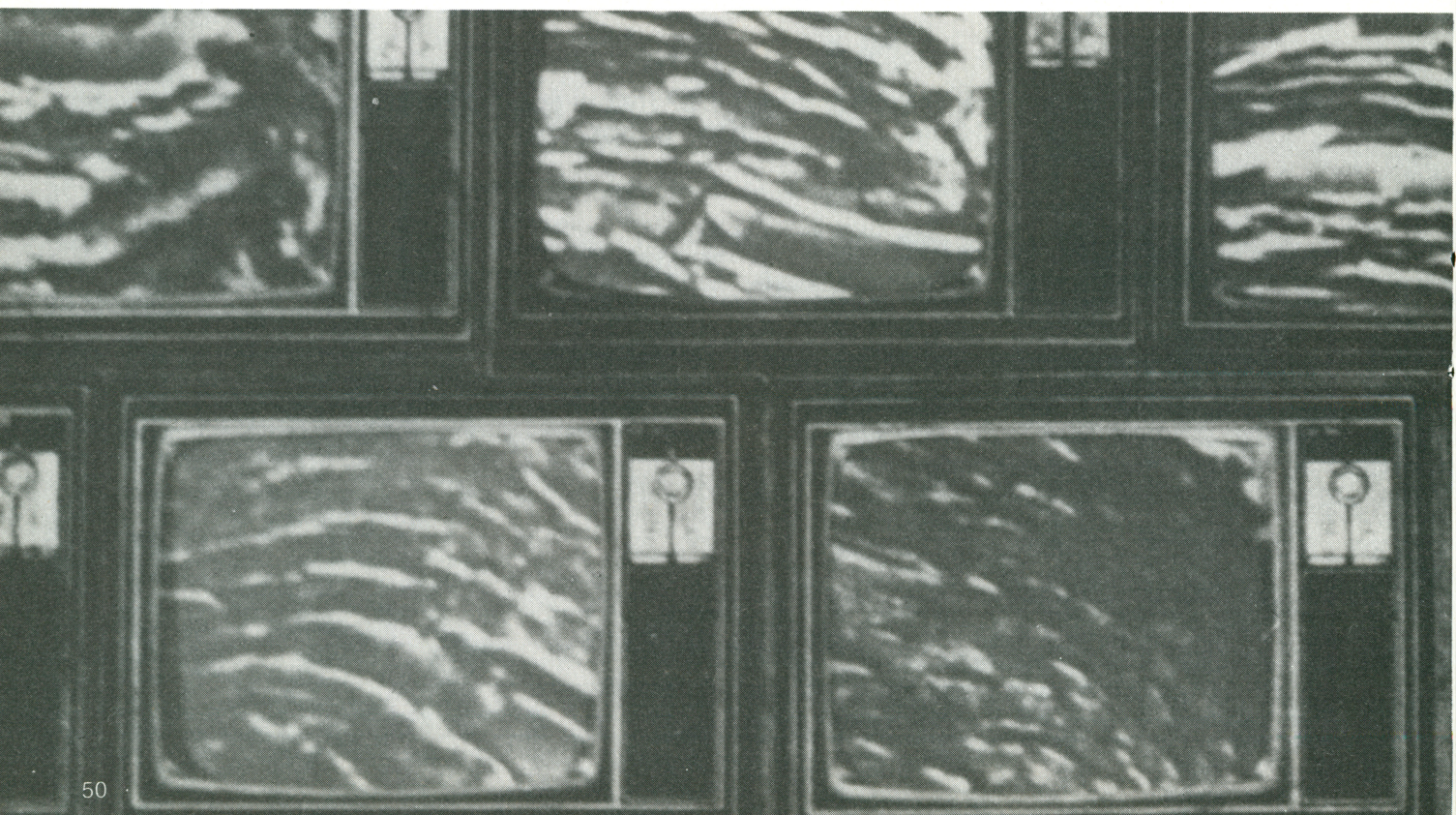


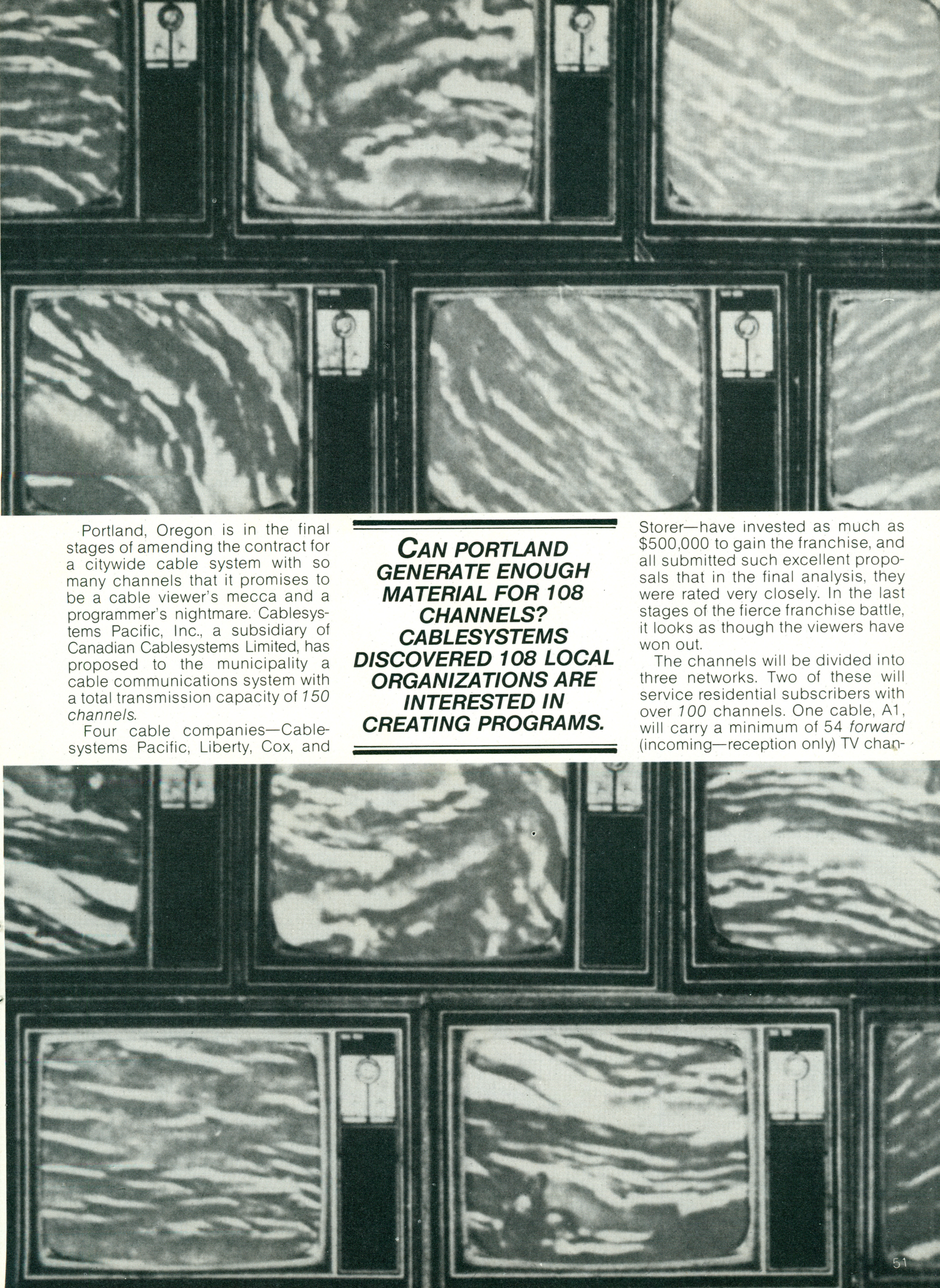
150 Channels?!

Portland, Oregon's Coming Cable Cornucopia

Photo ©copyright Frank Mouris

By Constance Brand





Portland, Oregon is in the final stages of amending the contract for a citywide cable system with so many channels that it promises to be a cable viewer's mecca and a programmer's nightmare. Cablesystems Pacific, Inc., a subsidiary of Canadian Cablesystems Limited, has proposed to the municipality a cable communications system with a total transmission capacity of 150 channels.

Four cable companies—Cablesystems Pacific, Liberty, Cox, and

**CAN PORTLAND
GENERATE ENOUGH
MATERIAL FOR 108
CHANNELS?
CABLESYSTEMS
DISCOVERED 108 LOCAL
ORGANIZATIONS ARE
INTERESTED IN
CREATING PROGRAMS.**

Storer—have invested as much as \$500,000 to gain the franchise, and all submitted such excellent proposals that in the final analysis, they were rated very closely. In the last stages of the fierce franchise battle, it looks as though the viewers have won out.

The channels will be divided into three networks. Two of these will service residential subscribers with over 100 channels. One cable, A1, will carry a minimum of 54 forward (incoming—reception only) TV chan-

nels and FM radio, and up to 4 reverse (outgoing—taking a signal from the home to a monitoring station) channels; A2, will carry 54 TV channels and FM radio, up to 4 reverse channels, unswitched data or one-way data, and an interactive system.

To provide the total of 108 channels requires a 400 megahertz technology, which will not be available immediately at the system's activation. Initially, the cable company will power 69 channels with 11 more video channels available for immediate use when needed. Further available channel expansion of the subscriber network brings the grand total to the much touted "100-plus" channels. The Portland franchise ordinance states that the city can require Cablesystems to provide the full amount at a later date.

The third network will connect institutional and commercial subscribers throughout the city. This cable has a bidirectional design with 20-plus forward channels and 17 reverse channels on each trunk.

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cable
system.**

Uniquely, Portland's first *Request for Franchise Proposal* stated that the institutional network, a service the city was eager to obtain, must pay for itself. This ensures that residential subscribers' monthly fees will not rise in exchange for the business community's support of the cable company.

What, then, can subscribers expect to see on their first 69 channels? How the hell can you fill nearly six dozen television channels?

The bulk of the programming, as it is with commercial broadcasting, will be entertainment. The current choices are rich.

Five pay-TV channels are offered. Home Box Office and Showtime will feature first run movies, uncut, and without commercials; The Movie Channel offers similar fare on a 24-hour schedule; the Home Theater Network, which bills itself as a "mini-pay-TV service," is family-oriented with PG and G rated movies.

Finally there is Tele-Theatre—an interactive service allowing the sub-

scriber to pay per viewing. It will run internationally-acclaimed foreign films that have not received much exposure but left the critics raving, as well as the more familiar American features. Obviously, this service is geared to a minority audience generally ignored by both commercial stations and most cable systems. Tele-Theatre will be programmed by Cablesystems Pacific.

Three "superstations" will be directly imported via satellite; WTBS Atlanta, WGN Chicago, and KTVU Oakland/San Francisco. WTBS Atlanta features 40 movies per week with a maximum of six per day. For all those sports fans in Portland, Ted Turner's Atlanta station offers the games of the Braves, Hawks, Flames, and Falcons, as well as collegiate basketball, championship wrestling, grand prix tennis, and the North American Soccer League.

WGN Chicago also features major league baseball, an additional 50

hours of various sports, and 250 hours of movies a month. The Second City has ousted New York for once, with Portlanders privy to fine documentaries, children's programming, women's shows, and theater and arts programs. KTVU Oakland/San Francisco carries many fine syndicated programs. As icing on the cake, and to fill in the programming delay required by the FCC to protect the broadcasters, a "wild card" New York station, either WOR or WCBS will be scheduled, bringing the Big Apple back to the many East Coasters who have made Portland their new home.

If American broadcasting doesn't suit you, England's or Canada's might. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) will share a channel with TV Nostalgia of the 50s and 60s (ohmygosh, 1960's *nostalgia*?). An interesting contrast between American and British cultures should be apparent to habitual viewers of this schizophrenic channel. Finally, programs from Canada's two major networks, the CBC and the CTV, will

be offered. This last makes sense from the cable company's economic point of view—the system is Canadian-owned—interestingly, CBC and CTV broadcast many *American* shows before they hit the U.S. networks.

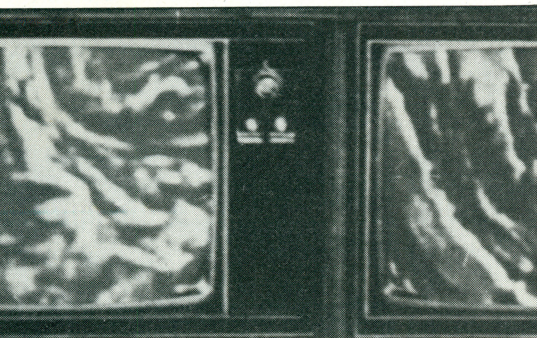
Other satellite service channels are selected for very specific audiences. The Black Entertainment Television (USA Network) channel features major black entertainers and films, both feature and documentary. The National and World News from Reuters will carry eight video pages of stock market statistics from *American and New York* Exchanges, including the NYSE ticker on a 15-minute delayed basis (according to NYSE stipulations) and quotations for NYSE listed stocks traded on the other regional exchanges.

For the budding politician or devoted lobbyist in the home, the Cable Satellite Public Affairs Network ("C-SPAN" on the USA Network)—broadcasting from noon to 5 PM—covers the U.S. House of Repre-

sentatives sessions. The U.S. Senate may be added in the future. The Appalachian Community Service Network, with 35 program hours per week, five hours per day, carries instructional programs for Master of Business Arts (MBA) degrees, and for small businesses and the various health professions. Other programming covers senior citizens, consumer education, self-help, money management, and first aid.

TWO SATELLITE SERVICES on one channel are devoted to children's programming. Billed as "non-violent" and "non-sexist" programming, Nickelodeon runs all day with *Pin-Wheels*, puppets and animation, *Video Comic Books*, *Nickel Flicks* with favorite serials of the 30s and 40s such as *Rin Tin Tin*, *Flash Gordon*, and *Gene Autry*, and *By the Way*, a kind of adventure series for kids using documentary and fiction films with characters they can identify with.

Calliope (USA Network) is programmed by the Learning Corpora-



tion of America. From their large library of educational films two hours of quality children's shows will be available each evening. The National Film Board of Canada's world renowned films, a new Canadian children's service Galaxie, and locally produced programs will round out this channel.

For senior citizens, the Cinemerica Satellite Network provides public service for 60 percent of the programming and entertainment including evening repeats and some locally originated specials actually produced by seniors.

The Cable News Network is a 24-hour news service, pioneered by Turner Communications with former political and media celebrities reporting and commenting on the news. The Satellite Program Network and the Modern Satellite Network are two composite services especially designed for cable exhibition with the advice of a Program Committee from the industry.

The Entertainment and Sports Pro-

***If American
broadcasting
doesn't suit
you
England's
or Canada's
might: the
BBC will
share a
channel
with TV
Nostalgia
and
programs
from CBC
and CTV will
be offered.***

gramming Network will highlight over 350 national collegiate athletic events with seven mobile units in different areas of the nation. Sports-related talk shows, game shows, and feature films will augment the events, eventually leading to 24 hour coverage. If that's not enough for the armchair athlete, the USA Network covers Madison Square Garden, NBA basketball, weekly soccer, baseball and college sports. This in addition to the sports programming offered on WTBS and WGN.

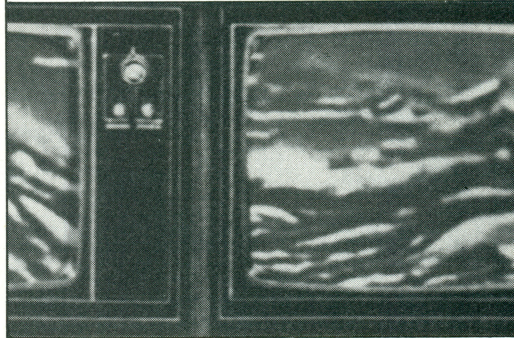
For the churchgoer, three religious networks, Christian Broadcasting Network, National Christian Network, and Trinity Broadcasting Network will provide multi-denominational programming from *Pray for America* to gospel singing.

Video games, anyone? A second interactive two-way entertainment channel will allow the player, with the help of the Home Transmitter Terminal and remote-controlled key-

pad vie with Cablesystems' computer for the home championship. Bored with games but still willing to stare at the screen? Switch to Video Music. Abstract patterns may lull you to sleep or otherwise change your consciousness.

Tired of the wide, wide world of satellites and big broadcasters? Need something a little closer to home? Portland is, after all, more of a small town than a big city. One can watch one's neighbors.

BESIDES CABLECASTING SIX local broadcasting stations, Cablesystems Pacific has planned 14 entirely locally originated channels and five community access channels—with room for expansion. The community access channels are to be programmed during the prime time hours. There is a difference between *local origination* and *community access*, a very large difference. Local origination, in Portland's franchise lingo, means produced, programmed, and managed by the corporation: Cablesystems Pacific. Community access is de-



fined as programs and channels managed by the Community Cable Corporation (CCC) and produced by individuals and groups of the communities in Portland. More on this later.

The local origination "theme" channels, as they are called, have another interesting twist available. The majority of them may be interactive. Audiences at home may respond to their local representation on the cable with opinion polls, or the cable equivalent of "phone-ins." Instructional programs can operate with student feedback, either noting answers to questions in groups or individually.

There is an inherent problem with this capability, of course. In order to obtain these "extras," one must pay a higher monthly cable fee, which unalterably biases the results in favor of a wealthier audience. This is such an obvious given that these polls, if meant to represent a larger population, are bound to become controversial indices. However, the

cablecaster may be concerned only with the audience of that particular show. At the moment, such problems are still a matter of speculation and marketing technique.

Cablesystems Pacific has been committed to hiring 33 staff members for local origination, including a Black Public Programming Coordinator, an Environmental Channel Coordinator, three Portland City TV producers for one channel, a coordinator for the Tele-Arts channel, an Oregon Sports and Recreation Coordinator, a Tele-Health Coordinator, and a Community Education Coordinator for two channels. In addition, there is a Government channel, Cablevision for the Hearing Impaired, and a Humanities channel.

Finally, two channels are called Tele-Select, allowing the viewer to select from a library of locally originated taped programs and excellent broadcast and satellite shows.

Is Portland motivated to generate enough material to fill these channels? Apparently so. Cablesystems Pacific contacted 197 Portland or-

Video games, anyone? An interactive entertainment channel will allow players to compete with others over Cable-systems' computer for the home championship.

ganizations and discovered 67 percent would be interested in creating programs. Motives ranged from entertainment to soliciting new members to educating the community about issues they felt were important. Or consider the arts. According to the Oregon Foundation for the Arts, audiences in Portland for the arts have risen 60 percent over the last three years.

Community access has been bargained for heavily in this particular franchise-granting process, unlike much previous city cable franchising. The fee to the city is five percent of Cablesystem Pacific's annual gross revenues: gross as opposed to net, which is earmarked for access programming, management and production. The Cable Communications Regulatory Commission (CCRC) will receive 60 percent of the five percent franchise fee to publish reports, and monitor all cable activities in the city. This seven member board will appoint the board of the Community Cable Corporation (CCC), an independent nonprofit corpora-

tion, which will receive 40 percent of the five percent franchise fee.

The CCC will also be raising extra funds for staff and production, while the cable company has promised production equipment and facilities, three coordinators for the district studios, and technicians.

Forty percent of the franchise amount, roughly estimated to be \$100,000 a year, will go towards supporting the three district studios and 30 access points with modulators hooked up to the master system, and several mobile units. The community access channels will be controlled by the CCC—completely independent from the cable company and from the city council.

THE FIVE BASIC ACCESS channels will be free to all subscribers. Bob Flug, director of the Creative Outlet, Video Access, is on a very small scale trying to do now what the community access channels will do in the future, explains, "Commercial TV is trying to sell a product, they try to

plan so it is not possible to offend anyone so you get the lowest-common-denominator-Neilsen-rating sort of programming. Community programming, public access programming, has a very different philosophy. You are not selling anything, you're not a commercial program. What you are trying to do is reach some very specific groups with some very specific information. If you're doing a program in Spanish you don't necessarily want the rest of the city to watch it. Or if you're doing a program on, say, a women's hotline, or on Indochinese emergency services.

"The object of the program is not to get as many people to watch it, but to select a specific audience and to program for that audience. So to ask how many people are watching is really to ask the wrong question. A better question would be how many groups are going to use it, how many groups are going to be producing on it, and addressing their own groups with it."

Finally, and perhaps the greatest

attraction of all, is the information programming, or alpha-numeric programming. More simply, "video print." At its *simplest* level, a channel will provide: a 24-hour TV listing with a weekly schedule, program highlights, and a channel-by-channel rundown; Telepages, to be a "video newsletter" for the Portland community, with reports, schedules, events of interest and "newscasts;" a graphic Weather Radar visual display; and the "shopping basket," Consumer Tips/Shopping Comparisons with store-by-store grocery prices per item displayed. More complex information combined with interactive capabilities are the Time-Shared Telidon, Tele-Education, Tele-Shopping, Tele-Banking, and Tele-Tri-Met (Portland's bus company).

Time-Shared Telidon, a "teletext" service occupying two channels with 50 decoders, will be shared by 300 subscribers to one decoder. A requested page of information will remain on the screen for 20 seconds. The probability has been estimated that no more than three subscribers

will want the data retrieval system at the same time. Three people multiplied by 20 seconds equals one minute waiting time for the information to reach the screen. The information to be stored on the cable computer is to be of general interest: what's happening in Portland; university and college catalogs and schedules; classified ads; transportation schedules; emergency services; car pooling; and Tele-Select information.

The interactive capabilities alone will provide via the Home Transmitter Terminal several alarm systems, a medic alert, and "energy management"—the ability to turn appliances on and off at peak power hours, thus lowering the electric bills and saving energy.

Information retrieval, or computer searching, at its most complex is dependent upon expensive interfacing equipment that is anticipated to drop in price from \$3600 per unit to \$300 within the next five years. It will exist in a limited fashion at the time of the system's activation, but the capabilities will be no less astounding.

Whew. And that's just the *first* 69 channels.

SO HOW MUCH WILL ALL OF this cost? Well, probably less than your phone bill, if you're not too greedy. If you want it all, not too much more. Installation—a one-time expense—will be \$24.95. With installation, you can receive the five basic access channels with no

"Commercial TV is trying to sell a product—public access programming is trying to reach very specific groups with some very specific information."

monthly charge. Tier two will give you 21 channels, and requires a converter. If you own the converter, it's \$3.15 a month maximum. You can rent one from the company for \$.80 more per month.

Tier three gives you 40 channels, with the superstations, HBO, Showtime, satellite services, local origination programs and community access. If you own your own converter, it will be at most \$6.50/month; if you rent, \$7.95; if you want basic interactive service (at this level for local origination programs and the pay-TV services), the price rises to \$9.70.

These prices are about as cheap as your average telephone bill. For 57 channels with Time-Shared Telidon, Tele-Select, Tele-Theatre, information retrieval, video games, and all the previous Tier options, it will only be, at maximum charge, \$10.45 per month. The fully interactive service charge hasn't yet been determined.

Steve Jolin, director of the city's Office of Cable Communications, remarked that all of the proposals were quite rich in programming and that generally the city government was quite pleased with the proposed plans. Jolin's only concern was for the cultural arts—that concern has been alleviated by some of the broadcasters making more of this type of programming available to cable. "If programs are available, but not going to reach a mass audience, it's nonetheless feasible for a cable system to carry it. There's kind of an intrinsic hopefulness in it—to see some things being programmed without a mass appeal."

With 69 channels—or 108, or 150 (if the system reaches its full potential), mass appeal is a near-impossibility. The most interesting aspect of the Portland experiment—what such a system does to and for its citizens—remains to be seen. ■

next month in

VIDEO ACTION

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VIDEO ACTION July 1981 issue—ON SALE June 11



CANNELL

REVISITED

INTERVIEW by Barbara Krasner

STEPHEN CANNELL WAS THE subject of the first Video Action interview back in our December 1980 issue. At that time we looked at the career of the man who brought class to a worn-out genre, the man who produced, wrote, and often created such shows as *Baretta*, *Stone*, *Ten-speed* and *Brownshoe*, and *The Rockford Files*.

Recently, Cannell diverted his attention from the now-safe world of detective-with-humor to the completely unsafe realm of super-hero fantasy. The graveyard of television fantasy is filled with the remains of such programs: *Wonder Woman*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *The Man from Atlantis*—even *The Incredible Hulk* is fighting for survival. Cannell is taking risks.

Originally prepared as a two hour pilot, *The Greatest American Hero* "went to series" last March to fill in a glaring hole in ABC's line-up caused by the

cancellation of another fantasy-thriller, *Charlie's Angels*. Cannell found a solid cast: Robert Culp, of *I Spy* fame, and William Katt (*Butch and Sundance: The Early Years*, *Carrie*) to star with relative unknown Connie Selleca. ABC has an impressive degree of confidence in the project: they commissioned eight episodes, enough to play out the rest of the 1980-81 season with a few weeks to spare.

And why did Cannell decide to go the "Superman" route? Because he thinks he can do it better.

VIDEO ACTION: Have you ever done science fiction before?



Or why a big-name television producer would switch from detective shows to super-hero fantasy



William Katt stars as the average American school teacher cum super-hero and Connie Sellecca stars as his lawyer/girlfriend—who he constantly gets out of trouble.

CANNELL: No, this will be my first try.

VA: I'm surprised you're trying science fiction. You're so well known for your work in the detective genre.

CANNELL: Well, when I was writing those pilots, that was what the networks were buying. You couldn't give them anything if it wasn't a cop show. You do sort of tend to get typed . . . what I basically think of myself as, in terms of a writer, is somebody who likes to do realistic dramas with humor.

VA: Do you feel that fantasy, or science fiction, is going to be a viable medium for you?

CANNELL: Oh yes, absolutely . . . as *Rockford Files* in a strange way sort of took on all the larger-than-life aspects of the private detective, and held them up for a certain amount of amusement . . . That's what I'm doing with *The Greatest American Hero*.

You take what has become, basically, the accepted format for something and you bend it. Bend it toward the reality of what it is really like in the real world. From that comes the over-spend for the humor.

So, in *The Greatest American Hero* I have a guy who is approached by a flying saucer one night.

A close encounter, basically. The people in the saucer, the aliens, say they are really concerned about what is happening on earth and that the "extraterrestrial council" has given

I don't select ideas based on subjects like science fiction or detectives . . . or anything. I select them based on whether they would be fun to write about.

them permission to select two guys. The first guy is the hero, Ralph Hinkley—I like non-heroic names like that.

VA: Average names?

CANNELL: Yes, like Lionel Whitney is not your average hero name.

So, Ralph Hinkley is out there involved in this close encounter

with another fellow (who's a total opposite to him), a guy named Bill Maxwell. Maxwell is sort of the "flag in the lapel" type guy, an FBI agent, who speaks in Pentagonese. Ralph Hinkley is a special-ed teacher at a high school. He deals with problem children.

They are given this superman suit, which Hinkley is supposed to wear. With it comes an instruction book on how to use it . . . it has all these super-powers. Hinkley abruptly loses the instruction book. He doesn't know how to use anything on the suit. From that point forward it is really what would happen if you or I had that problem . . . of trying to be Superman.

VA: What kind of problems?

CANNELL: This guy is in a child-custody case with his ex-wife over his seven-year-old son. At one point in the pilot her private detective gets a photograph of him in this long-john suit and cape, and that ends up in court. It's not easy to be Superman.

What we do then is just go on like we did with *Rockford Files*, and take all the real aspects of trying to be Superman and deal with them.

Of course I've added some english to it. Superman came from another planet, he knew all about his powers, and how to be a hero. While our guy . . . when he first flies it's because of personal necessity not because he wants too.

VA: He doesn't want to be a hero?

CANNELL: Right. His initial response to this idea is that he's just not going to have anything to do with it. But he's late for a court appearance and gets caught in a traffic jam . . . he knows he can't make it so he pulls into a gas station and changes into this suit to try and fly over there.

When he tries to fly he realizes that he's got terrible right rudder problems and he goes into these barrel rolls. He hits a brick wall and it knocks him out. He gets picked up by some Hollywood cops and is taken to the nut-house . . . with the flowing cape, long-johns, and the whole thing.

There's a lot of humor in it, but in the midst of all of *this he still* manages to solve his problems.

VA: There is *still* a serious aspect?

CANNELL: Yes. The humor basically comes when he loses. When he flies he can't leave his coat in the phone booth like Superman, it would get ripped off and he doesn't have that kind of money. So he tries to take it with him, he drops the coat when he crashes . . . now he has lost his earth-shoes and his coat. So, it is also the

very real, practical aspects of trying to be Superman . . . plus actually doing the stunts and special effects.

Because of some of the processes that we've investigated—and one that we developed ourselves—we may be able to do it *better* than the *Superman* movies. Our flying sequences and special effects will be better than the stuff in *Superman*. That at least is my goal.

VA: Those effects were impressive.

CANNELL: I didn't think they were. When I looked at them I was instantly aware that it was matte photography. It had a very two-dimensional look. There were times when it looked almost like the Superman flying in those shots was a cut-out. I know it wasn't but it looked like it because of the way they had to light it in order to get the matte photography to work right.

We have figured out a way, by using video techniques, to totally eliminate that problem.

VA: Using Magicam?

CANNELL: Yes, using Magicam. We're putting Magicam together with Compact Video. Compact Video has 1000 line resolution as opposed to the regular 525 that you get on a regular television camera. *Superman* director Richard Donner could not use video techniques because at that time nobody had ever put Compact Video together with the Magicam. That process did not exist when he did *Superman*. We are the first ones to have thought that problem out, and put those two companies together. We shot some tests and the effect is incredible.

VA: Then your new process could make those kinds of effects really spectacular?

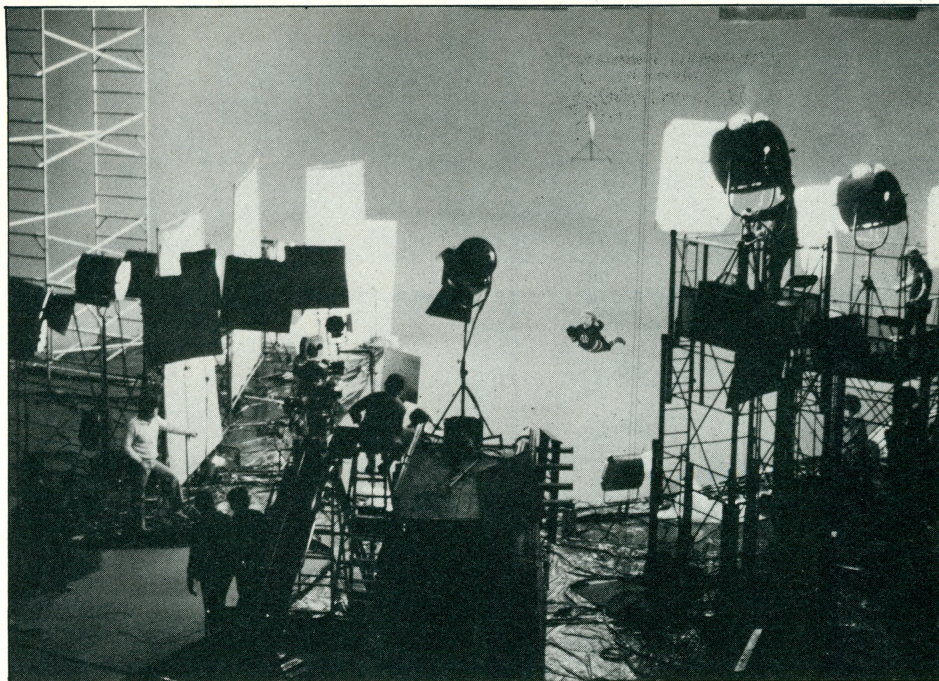
CANNELL: We hope so. We are hoping to have a very lush looking picture in terms of the effects. We will not cheat on that at all. But we want to have a real character, with the real problem of this superman suit.

VA: Before you decided on this project did you consult any people in the science fiction and fantasy field who are already familiar with the TV and film industry? Harlan Ellison, Richard Matheson, Buck Henry?

CANNELL: No.

VA: So, you really are going it totally alone.

CANNELL: I don't think of it as going it alone. I'm just doing what I feel; what I want. I did not feel I really needed to talk to Harlan Ellison. He's very talented and quite creative, but the whole idea is that I wrote the script, I had to come up with what I



Magicam blue stage—flying sequence for the Stephen J. Cannell ABC series THE GREATEST AMERICAN HERO.

felt was right.

Obviously, I was as exposed to the Superman image like everybody else in this country. So, what I'm trying to do is take that as a background and use real human values . . . to have fun with it, to use my imagination.

For instance, when the spaceship speaks to him . . . we all wonder how it would be, how it would really happen. I was sitting at the typewriter and initially I had him go into the ship. It turned to Jello, because it felt like an old *Twilight Zone*.

VA: Something that has been done before?

CANNELL: Yes. If you look at *Close Encounters* . . . where that went around the corner for me was when the little people came out. Because, you and I as an audience were expecting more or less, but it was always a disappointment.

What I chose to do was never have anybody come out of the ship. Ralph ends up trapped in his car, with this thing hovering over him. They speak to him on the car radio. The radio starts switching back and forth picking up a word here, a phrase there, a bit of a song, and that makes a sentence.

VA: Very clever idea.

CANNELL: It should be really spooky, with the opticals, special effects, and the music. It's just a writer's imagination. That's the business I'm in, and that's the business Harlan's in. You try to figure out ways to make those things as interesting, and cinematic, and spooky as you can.

VA: So many science fiction series have failed in recent years. Do you

have any reservations about doing your series?

CANNELL: Yes, but this isn't science fiction *per se*.

VA: Fantasy?

CANNELL: Yes, it is fantasy, and a lot of that has not failed. Look at *The Six Million Dollar Man*, and shows of that nature. Not that this show will be anything like that.

As good as *Star Trek* was, and as innovative and wonderful, it could never get a number. It was a 26 share show. The 26 share—that percentage of viewers that were watching *Star Trek*—would stay home to watch it. I mean, they were absolutely committed viewers.

The episodes were wonderful. But I think the problem is that there are not enough Americans who want to see that. If it was 33 percent as opposed to 26, then those things would go on and be on forever.

VA: If *The Greatest American Hero* does not succeed, will you try with another science fiction or fantasy show?

CANNELL: I do not select ideas based on whether they are science fiction or detective . . . or anything. I select them based on whether I feel it would be fun to write about.

The Greatest American Hero idea came out of a meeting I had with ABC. I thought it would be a fun idea—*Rockford* with a superman franchise. What fun . . . because it would allow me the same kind of dry humor that I did on *Rockford Files*. Based on that I said I would love to write it. So I did. I created something I enjoy. ■

NEW TAPE & DISC RELEASES



Ryan O'Neal and his daughter Tatum in PAPER MOON

RCA SELECTAVISION

(capacitance disc):

(30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, NY 10020)

The French Connection—(1971), the acclaimed Academy Award-winning action film about an attempt to smuggle a huge load of heroin into New York City and the eccentric police detectives who thwart it. Starring Gene Hackman, Fernando Rey, Roy Scheider, Tony LoBianco, and Marcel Bozzuff. Directed by William Friedkin.

The Longest Day—(1962), star-studded reenactment of the Allied invasion of Normandy. Starring Rod Steiger, John Wayne, Robert Ryan, Henry Fonda, and many others. Directed by Ken Annakin, Andrew Marton, and Bernard Wicki.

Tora! Tora! Tora!—(1970), an interesting treatment of the events which led up to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, told from both sides' point of view. Starring Martin Balsam, Soh Yamamura, Jason Robards, Joseph Cotten, Tatsuya Mihashi, E.G. Marshall, and James Whitmore. Directed by Richard Fleisher, Toshio Masuda, and Kinji Fukasaku.

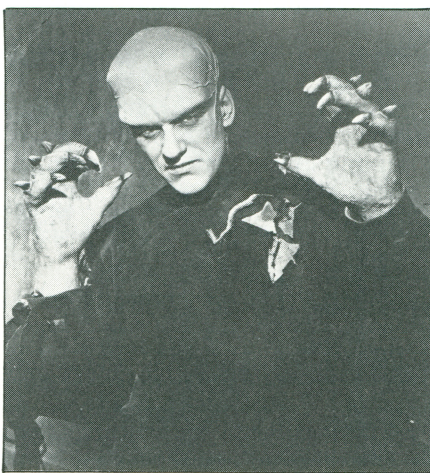
Escape From Alcatraz—(1979), based upon the true story of a 1962 escape from the "escape-proof" prison. Starring Clint Eastwood, Patrick McGouhan, Roberts Blossom, Jack Thibau, Fred Ward, and Paul Benjamin. Directed by Don Siegel.

The Boys From Brazil—(1978), a fictional Dr. Josef Mengele (the real-life Nazi "medical" experimenter at

Auschwitz) is portrayed by Gregory Peck in this story of a plan to breed a new race of Hitlers. With Laurence Olivier, James Mason, Lilli Palmer, Uta Hagen, and Anne Meara. Directed by Franklin J. Schaffner.

Sands of Iwo Jima—(1949), a rousing war movie about a young guy who gets his act together in the military and is subjected to both John Wayne and several thousand irate Japanese troops. With John Agar, Adele Mara, Forrest Tucker, and Arthur Franz. Directed by Allan Dwan.

The Black Stallion—(1979), a beautifully filmed heart-warming story about a boy, a horse, a shipwreck on a desert island, and a championship race. With Kelly Reno, Mickey Rooney, Teri Garr, Clarence Muse, Hoyt Axton, and Michael Higgins. Directed by Carroll Ballard.

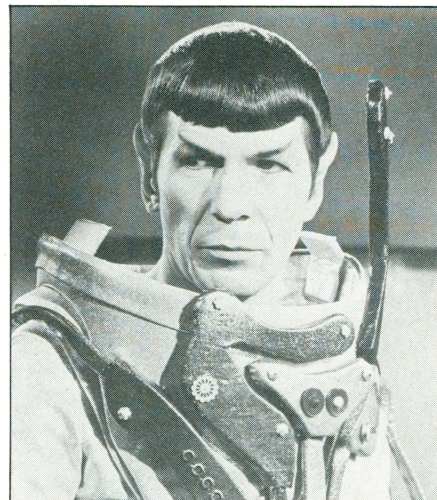


James Arness as "The Thing"

The Thing—(1951), James Arness as the "Thing" turns in a surprisingly good performance in this slightly-dated science fiction thriller about scientists in an Arctic station who discover a critter from Outer Space. With Margaret Sheridan, Kenneth Tobey, Robert Cornwaite, and Douglas Spencer. Directed by Christian Nyby.

Star Trek—The Motion Picture—(1979), the old crew (William Shatner, Leonard Nimoy, and DeForest Kelley) and some new faces manage to spend nearly \$40,000,000 in this space opera that most critics and some fans found lacking. Directed by Robert Wise.

Planet of the Apes—(1968), Charlton Heston stars as an astronaut who along with two fellow spacemen, land in the



Everyone's favorite Vulcan, from STAR TREK THE MOTION PICTURE

post-atomic future where apes are masters and humans are animal-like slaves. With Roddy McDowall, Kim Hunter, Maurice Evans, and James Whitmore. Directed by Franklin J. Schaffner.

Hello, Dolly—(1969), Barbara Streisand as matchmaker Dolly Levi in this musical based upon the hit play. Also stars Walter Matthau, Michael Crawford, and Louis Armstrong. Directed by Gene Kelly.

Gigi—(1959), musical based on Colette's tale of a young girl as she becomes a woman in Paris of the early 1900s. Starring Leslie Caron, Maurice Chevalier, Louis Jordan, Hermione Gingold, Jacques Bergerac, and Eva Gabor. Directed by Vincent Minnelli.

Meet Me in St. Louis—(1944), the famous Judy Garland musical about a wholesome American family at the 1903 St. Louis World's Fair. With Maragret O'Brien, Mary Astor, June Lockhart, Harry Davenport, Leon Ames, and Tom Drake. Directed by Vincent Minnelli.

On the Town—(1949), the classic musical about three sailors and their girlfriends on a day trip to New York City. Starring Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra, Vera Ellen, Betty Garrett, Ann Miller, Jules Munshin, and Alice Pearce. Directed by Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen.

Fiddler On the Roof—(1971), colorful musical adapted from Sholem Aleichem stories of Jewish life in the village of Anatekva. Starring Chaim Topol, Norma Crane, Leonard Frey, Molly Picon, Paul Mann, and Neva Small. Directed by Norman Jewison.



Richard Gere tries to seduce Diane Keaton in *LOOKING FOR MR. GOODBAR*

Lady Sings the Blues—(1972), Diana Ross stars as the famous jazz and blues singer Billie Holiday. With Billy Dee Williams, Richard Pryor, James Callahan, and Paul Hampton. Directed by Sidney J. Furie.

Easter Parade—(1948), Judy Garland and Fred Astaire star in this Irving Berlin musical about a dancer who tries to forget his ex-dancing partner (Ann Miller) as he rises to the top. With Peter Lawford and Jules Munshin. Directed by Charles Walters.

G.I. Blues—(1960), Elvis Presley and Juliet Prowse star in this musical of a G.I. and his friends who form a musical group while on duty in Germany. Directed by Norman Taurog.

Adam's Rib—(1949), the popular Spencer Tracy/Katherine Hepburn flick concerning a husband and wife who are both attorneys on opposite sides of the same case. With Judy Holliday, Tom Ewell, Jean Hagen, and Polly Moran. Directed by George Cukor.

Philadelphia Story—(1940), the star-studded story of a divorced society lady who wants a "down-to-earth" romance. Starring Cary Grant, Katherine Hepburn, James Stewart, Ruth Hussey, and John Howard. Directed by George Cukor.

Play It Again, Sam—(1972), Woody Allen stars in this movie adaption of his own play about a movie fan, obsessed by Bogart, and his attempts toward romance after his divorce. With Diane Keaton, Tony Roberts, Viva, and Susan Anspach. Directed by Herbert Ross.

The Bad News Bears—(1976), comedy of a losing Little League team and its beer-swilling coach. Starring Walter Matthau, Tatum O'Neal, Vic Morrow, and Joyce Van Patten. Directed by Michael Ritchie.

The Muppet Movie—(1979), your favorite television puppet troupe star in this tale of Kermit the Frog's journey from a Georgia swamp to Hollywood stardom. Directed by James Frawley.

Movie, Movie—(1978), interesting and unusual parody of 1930s double features, starring George C. Scott, Trish

Van Devere, Eli Wallach, and Red Buttons. Directed by Stanley Donen.

A Night At the Opera—(1935), the Marx Brothers in their famous trashing of the opera and the high society that surrounds it. With Kitty Carlisle, Allan Jones, Walter Wolf-King, Margaret Dumont, and Sig Ruman. Directed by Sam Wood.

Paper Moon—(1973), con man Ryan O'Neal and his young ward (real-life daughter Tatum O'Neal) lie and cheat and steal their way across country and into our hearts, circa 1935. With Madeline Kahn, John Hillerman, and P.J. Johnson. Directed by Peter Bogdanovich.

Ninotchka—(1939), comedy tale of a Russian agent (Greta Garbo) who falls in love with a man-about-town in Paris. With Melvyn Douglas, Bela Lugosi, Sig Ruman, and Richard Carle. Directed by Ernst Lubitsch.

North By Northwest—(1959), Hitchcock thriller about a man mistaken for a spy by secret agents. Starring Cary Grant, Eva Marie Saint, James Mason, Martin Landau, and Leo G. Carroll.

Laura—(1944), classic mystery of a detective who falls in love with the memory of a murder victim. Starring Gene Tierney, Dana Andrews, Clifton Webb, Vincent Price, and Dorothy Adams. Directed by Otto Preminger.

Citizen Kane—(1941), Orson Welles' famous tale about the rise and fall of a power broker. Considered by many to be the finest American movie ever made. Starring Welles, Joseph Cotten, Agnes Moorhead, and Ruth Warrich.

Looking for Mr. Goodbar—(1977), tale of the murder of a young singles' bar hopper. Starring Diane Keaton, Richard Gere, Tuesday Weld, and LeVar Burton. Directed by Richard Brooks.

The Longest Yard—(1974), Burt Reynolds as a convict and former professional football player who head a team of fellow cons in a game against the warden's team of security guards. With Eddie Albert, Bernadette Peters, and Jim Hampton. Directed by Robert Aldrich.

Romeo and Juliet—(1968), Shakespeare's famous romance starring Olivia Hussey, Leonard Whiting, Milo O'Shea, Michael York, John McEnergy, Pat Heywood, and Robert Stephens. Said by some to be the best version ever done for the movies. Directed by Franco Zeffirelli.

Casablanca—(1942), the classic Bogey flick. Period. Directed by Michael Curtiz.

The Ten Commandments—(1956), the critics said thou shalt not miss this one. Starring Charlton Heston, Yul Brynner, Anne Baxter, Edward G. Robinson, and many more. Directed by Cecil B. DeMille.

Hud—(1963), Paul Newman as the no-good amoral son of a cattle and oil baron. With Patricia Neal, Melvyn Douglas, Brandon de Wilde, and John Ashley. Directed by Martin Ritt.

Sunset Boulevard—(1950), Gloria Swanson plays an aging former silent film star who lives in the reflection of her past. With William Holden, Erich von Stroheim, Fred Clark, Jack Webb, Buster Keaton, and Hedda Hopper. Directed by Billy Wilder.

The Bears and I—(1974), Disney film about a Vietnam vet who tries to mediate between North Woods Indians and uptight whites. Starring Patrick Wayne, Chief Dan George, and Michael Ansara. Directed by Bernard McEveety.

Candleshoe—(1977), Disney flick about a con man who tries to pass off an orphan as the heiress to a family fortune. Starring David Niven, Jodie Foster, Helen Hayes, and Leo McKern. Directed by Norman Tokar.

The Great Locomotive Chase—(1956), based on the true story of Andrew's Raiders, a band of Union soldiers who wrecked havoc behind Confederate lines during the Civil War. A Disney film starring Fess Parker, Jeffrey Hunter, and Kenneth Tobey. Directed by Francis D. Lyon.

Old Yeller—(1957), Disney boy-and-dog story, centered in 1859 Texas farm life; dog, not listed in credits, gives credible performance. Starring also Dorothy McGuire, Fess Parker, Tommy Kirk, and Chuck Connors. Directed by Robert Stevenson.

To Russia . . . With Elton—(1980), singer Elton John in live performances filmed a couple years ago in the Soviet Union.

Julia Child—the French Chef, Volume 1—(1981), everyone's favorite television gourmet teaches how to prepare various exotic dishes.

VIDAMERICA

(tape):

(235 East 55th St., New York, NY 10022)

The Flying Leathernecks—(1951), John Wayne leads a Marine fighter squadron against the Japanese at Guadalcanal. With Robert Ryan, Don Taylor, and Janis Carter. Directed by Nicholas Ray.

The Amazing World of Psychic Phenomena—(1980), program hosted by Raymond Burr explores such subjects as extra-sensory perception, psychokinesis, and ghosts.

PAGANINIANA PUBLICATIONS, INC.

(tape):
(P.O. Box 427, Neptune, NJ 07753)

Heifetz & Piatigorsky—three long hair films on one cassette; black and white.

Arthur Rubinstein—two films of Rubinstein solos, and one of Rubinstein, Piatigorsky, and Heifetz playing trios; black and white.

Jan Peerce, Marian Anderson, and Andres Segovia—three separate films on one cassette; black and white.

Swan Lake—Tchaikowsky's ballet performed by the Kirov Ballet and the Leningrad Philharmonic; in color.

Bolshoi Ballet—exerpts from eight ballets, music performed by the Bolshoi Symphony Orchestra; in color.

Soviet Army Chorus, Band & Dance Ensemble—filmed at various locations as the troupe toured the Soviet Union.

Russian Folk Song & Dance—narrated by Tony Randall, with four different troupes performing regional songs and dances.

KARL VIDEO CORPORATION

(tape):
(129 Cabrillo St., Costa Mesa, CA 92627)

Graham Kerr: Soups and Salads—(1981), how to prepare such concoctions as Swedish Fruit Bloop Soup and Winter Salad, as well as Reformed French Dressing, Onion Soup, Blender Mayonnaise, and Chicken and Barley Soup. Comes with recipe booklet.

Graham Kerr: Desserts and Beverages—(1981), Kerr teaches you how to prepare Apple Lemon Souffle, Hot Sippin Cider, Low Calorie Cheesecake, 4th of July Parfait, and St. Vincent's Wine, among others.

CBS VIDEO ENTERPRISES

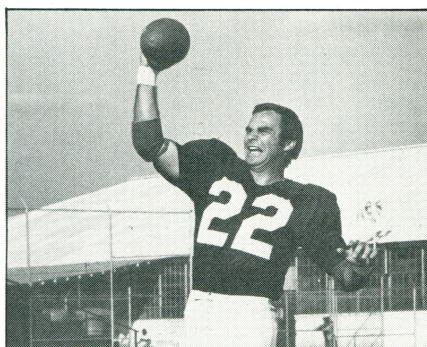
(tape):
(1700 Broadway, New York, NY 10019)

The Hostages: From Capture to Freedom—(1981), culled from the footage of the Iranian hostage crisis, this presentation traces the situation from its beginning to its end. Narrated by Charles Kuralt; part of the "CBS News Collectors Series."

KERMIT SCHAFER PRODUCTIONS

(tape):
(4900 S.W. 80th St., Miami, FL 33143)

Pardon My Blooper—authentic radio and television bloopers collected by the late Kermit Schafer, who, incidentally, invented the term "bloop" which he defined as "the unintended indiscretion before microphone and camera."



Burt Reynolds playing
quarterback in
THE LONGEST YARD

MEDIA HOME ENTERTAINMENT, INC.

(tape):
(116 N. Robertson Blvd., Suite 402, Los Angeles, CA 90048)

James Brown Live In Concert—need we say more?

Alice Cooper and Friends—one more time with the King of mondo rock.

VIDEO COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

(tape):
(6555 East Skelly Dr., Tulsa, OK 74145)

(The following titles are dubbed in Spanish. However they are available from other video distributors in English as well.):

Abbott and Costello Meet Captain Kidd
All Mine To Give
And Then There Were None
Back From Eternity
Bundle Of Joy
Chariots of the Gods
Children Shouldn't Play with Dead Things

A Christmas Carol
Clash by Night
Dark Star
Death Rage
The Deep Six
The Devil's Rain
Don't Look in the Basement
Drum Beat
Fabulous World of Jules Verne
The Family
First Spaceship on Venus
From the Earth to the Moon
A Gift for Heidi
The Girl Most Likely
Hell on Frisco Bay
House of the Living Dead
Journey
King of Kong Island
Life and Times of Grizzly Adams
The Lost Years
The Lucifer Complex
Malibu Beach
Malibu High
The Mysterians
The Naked and the Dead
Once Upon a Brothers Grimm
Outer Space Connection
Pinocchio
Pom Pom Girls
Rancho Notorious
Resurrection of Zachary Wheeler
Run of the Arrow
Sasquatch
Scream Bloody Murder
Son of Sinbad
Stanley
Sunshine Run
Susan Slept Here
A Swingin' Summer
Swiss Conspiracy
The Van
Van Nuys Boulevard
Without Reservations

PACIFIC ARTS VIDEO RECORDS

(tape):
(P.O. Box 22770, Carmel, CA 93922)

Elephant Parts—(1981), television-recording-video entertainer (and ex-Monkee) Michael Nesmith stars in his first video "record." Includes music, comedy, and dance created specifically for home video; recorded in stereo video cassette formats.

CABALLERO CONTROL CORPORATION

(tape):
(7920 Alabama Ave., Canoga Park, CA 91304)

The Filthy Rich—(1981), from the same folks who bring you other Swedish Erotica offerings, a full-length feature (x-rated) film, a "satiric" (satyr?) offering starring Samantha Fox, Lisa DeLeeuw, Jessie St. James, and Jack Wrangler.

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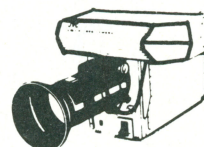
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BUCK ROGERS



Universal City Studios, 1979

DARK STAR © Bryanston, 1974



the sky's the limit

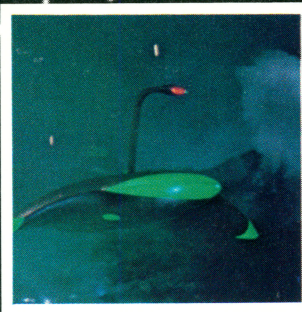
*Science Fiction in the
home video market,
on cable and
on television*

STAR WARS Lucasfilm Ltd., 1980

BARBARELLA © Paramount, 1968



WAR OF THE WORLDS



© Paramount, 1953

DR. WHO © BBC, 1975



SPACE: 1999 © ITV, 1974



By Robert Greenberger

If you were to take a look at the monthly best seller lists for video cassettes, any of the lists most likely would be made up of a hodge-podge of familiar titles. But if you look closely at the listings, you may notice that almost half of the titles fall into the science fiction category.

And when you return home from looking at those lists, you may rummage through the past few months' worth of cable guides. Since January, the various cable networks have supplied you with ALIEN, CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND—THE SPECIAL EDITION, METEOR, THE BLACK HOLE, and SATURN 3. Which is

not to mention the related realms of horror and fantasy: PETE'S DRAGON, MARY POPPINS, THE FOG, THE LEGACY, and HUMANOIDS FROM THE DEEP.

There apparently is sufficient interest in science fiction programming in the home video market and cable television. What the casual viewer may not notice is that there are also many science fiction projects that have been rumbling around the networks and independent stations. And all of this activity is appropriate because, in a way, science fiction was here before any of these new-fangled devices. Just as science fiction predicted man would be walking on the moon, the literature that has been



steadily produced since the days of Jules Verne has also foretold of television and programs that could be played on something very much like a disc or cassettes.

So what is science fiction's place in television and home video? After asking around and looking at the product available, *Video Action* has discovered that science fiction has a small but growing role. There are many viewers who love to escape to fantastic worlds and days yet to come but it may take them some time to get there because of practical concerns.

It is the dollars and sense of cable and home video that will keep science fiction limited for the next several years. While some people have an insatiable appetite for aliens and phasers, Hollywood just isn't producing enough quality films to make more than a small niche for science fiction on cable.

Jim Miller, vice president for programming at Showtime explains that they use "the big and not so big. Science fiction is not a major part of our programming. It is used occasionally. Big hits like *Alien* and *Close Encounters* are major pictures and we make every effort to purchase and show them. As for the lower budget films, if there are some with box office records, we would pick them based on the quality of production."

Miller did admit to there being many people interested in science fiction but not enough in number to warrant special consideration. When Showtime increased their weekend programming to 24 hours

a day, they made no provisions for showing late night science fiction or horror for the hardcore fans, despite the proven success of midnight film programs in theaters around the country. Miller said there were no plans to change that policy.

Home Box Office also does not try to cater to the science fiction audience, although their programming usually includes two science fiction and two horror offerings each month. "In general, we would not want to run two movies, we would rather go with a single strong film," notes Robbin Ahrold, HBO's director of publicity.

"Our evaluation of films for HBO's schedule are based on the number of things our subscribers are interested in. The genre is something we don't talk about when we talk about scheduling. Our choice is *not* on the basis of genre.

"We look at several factors including the gross at the box office, the recognition factor, how the critics reacted, how appealing the plot line is, and who the stars are. We have done substantial research. We use an outside research firm and they find out which films the people would most like to see. We may ask them to choose 50 out of a list of 100 films and then use the top 10. And that is done without reference to genre."

Interestingly enough, when HBO announced the top 10 favorite films of 1980, *Superman* was the only science fiction film to make it.

The "recognition factor" is also cited as being very important in the sale of video discs and cassettes.

Stores use the movie posters to decorate their windows and rework the movie ads for their own product. As far as Hollace Brown is concerned, knowing what that film is all about and who is in it can make or break sales. Brown is the director of advertising and sales promotion for Paramount Home Video and she's lucky enough to be selling the number one or two cassette of last winter: *Star Trek—The Motion Picture*.

Brown says the sales of the tape have not reached 100,000 units yet, but the sales have been strong for a number of months. After briefly running as a matinee item during the Thanksgiving and Christmas season, Paramount Pictures made the movie available for licensing to the company's home video arm. Sales should no doubt be strong with reports of *Star Trek* returning to television and even before the movie makes it to cable or ABC (which expects to run the film in the fall).

Paramount also has five cassettes available with episodes from the series. The episodes aren't selling as well—through an administrative fluke, several episodes from the popular series were aired without the proper copyright notice. Several firms have released those episodes on tape, much to Paramount's consternation.

There are also two discs of episodes available in the CED videodisc format.

Brown comments, "There is a healthy market for all genres, science fiction and comedy especially. They are the kind of



properties that can be viewed over and over. Science fiction is very well suited for the home video market. Movies like *Friday the 13th* and *Alien* do very well." Including Paramount's *War of the Worlds*, a 1953 classic from George Pal with Gene Barry, and Roger Vadim's *Barbarella* with a sexy and naive Jane Fonda.

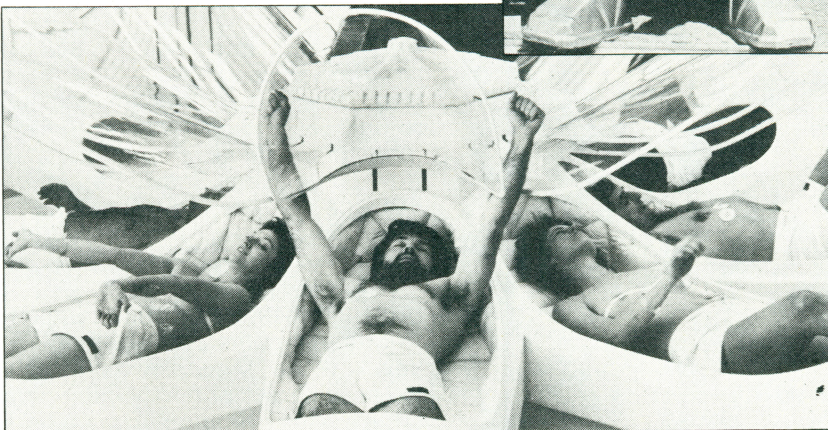
Currently, the popularity of a subject is what attracts consumers to purchase home video products, but the day may be far off before there are original science fiction productions available.

Brown's immediate comments on the subject were, "I think it would be a little difficult to produce new product for the home video market. Consumer knowledge is necessary. It is a chore most majors would not like to take on."

If that's the case, that leaves the area wide open for independent projects. At present there are few people actively exploring the idea of original product for home video outside of sporting or musical events. One of these people is Todd Rundgren. When the musician is not touring with his group, Utopia, he is working in his private studios on his property in upstate New York.

Rundgren has been extensively testing the formats open to him with computer enhanced illustrations and blue screen effects. He is currently undertaking a video adaptation of Holst's *The Planets* with a different set of images for each section of the piece. The project was originally financed by RCA for their videodisc line but they

While some people have an insatiable appetite for aliens and phasers, Hollywood just isn't producing enough quality science fiction films to make more than a small niche for itself on cable.



ALIEN © 20th Century-Fox, 1979

decided it was too expensive and backed out. Rundgren has been finishing the project on his own and is exploring ways to sell the product.

Marty Balin, formerly with the Jefferson Airplane and the Jefferson Starship, has been working on some video rock opera ideas. Included in that is *Rock*

Justice, an opera of the future in a society where you can be punished for not producing a hit record.

Cable networks have always been talking about the day when they will show original works you would never find on prime time television, but that day seems far, far away. What's holding them back is the



BUCK ROGERS © Universal City Studios, 1974

lack of large sums of money to invest in original productions. HBO has partially financed films in exchange for exclusive cable rights after the movies made their rounds of the theaters.

About three years ago, Showtime announced that they were going to be the first to produce a cable drama. In association with Quinn Martin, the producer of *The Immortal* and *The Invaders*, Showtime would produce a science fiction film for cable. It was an end-of-the-world scenario much like *When Worlds Collide*. There was a lot of hoopla in the press for almost a year but the project never materialized. Quinn Martin was bought out by Taft Broadcasting and an official at Showtime says, "It was before my time."

Cablers have discussed original programming with science fiction people. Gene Roddenberry, creator of *Star Trek*, has been approached about several properties but nothing has ever come of the discussions because there has not been enough money for production.



WONDER WOMAN © DC Comics Inc., 1981

Cable may be a closed avenue now, but it is one Roddenberry is watching.

Leslie Stevens has been long associated with both science fiction and television. As a writer/producer and director, he created several series including the popular *Outer Limits*, the underrated NBC series *Search*, and he worked on *Battlestar Galactica*. After ABC cancelled the series, he vowed never to work for television again, but he is not abandoning science fiction.

Cable is one area that interests the producer now but he is taking a realistic approach to its future. "The same problem besets cable as it does commercial television. Everything is determined by its budget," Stevens says from his home in California. "At this stage, they don't pay much for anything on cable. They only pay subsidiary rights. Cable is not capable at this point to produce original product. It doesn't even compare to what a sponsor plows into television. Commercial revenues are plowed into the production costs and all cable has at the moment are subscriber fees which do not amount to much.

"When they are ready to do an original program, their first financing will be what they think is a hit. Science fiction is a chancey-dicey thing that depends largely upon who they get to do it. If George Lucas walked in and said, 'I have an idea for a show' they would do it based on his incredible track record.

"They don't go by quality, they use a person's track record. Everything is decided strictly by money. I know it sounds kind of bleak, but the real impact of cable television is five or 10 years away."

This does not mean there will not be unique products coming to cable for another five or 10 years. At the moment, both Showtime and HBO are considering ITC's *Super Space Theater*. SST is made up of 15 different British titles, culled from ITC's great syndication vault. Working mostly with youth-oriented programming, the packagers in New York are trying to come up with two hour shows primarily meant for cable's early evening and weekend hours and for the syndication market.

Most of the shows in the package are from the fertile minds of Gerry and Sylvia Anderson. Since 1958 they have pioneered a form of puppetry called *supermarionation* and have created many shows using the process. Many of these shows enjoyed success on the

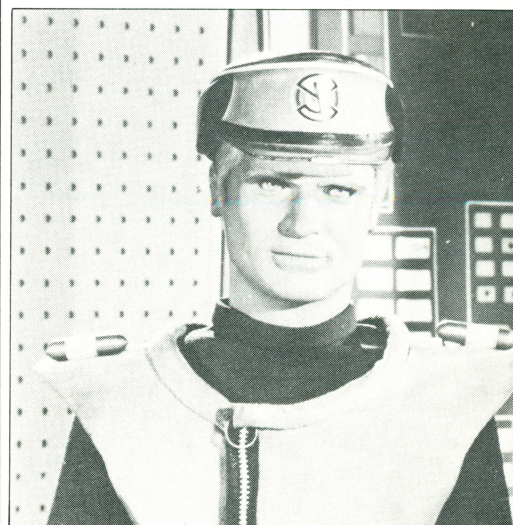


OUTER LIMITS © United Artists, 1963

syndication circuit in the 1960s and one, *Fireball XL-5*, made it to NBC's Saturday morning schedule in 1964.

Stingray, *Thunderbirds*, and *Captain Scarlet* are to be represented with two different shows each. The shows are re-edited using several episodes carefully tied together with incidental music and attention paid to story continuity. Added to the packages are two supermarionation shows never before seen in America, *Joe 90* and *Secret Service*.

UFO, the Anderson's first attempt at live action science fiction and *Space 1999* will also be in the package. 1999, a high budgeted program with Martin Landau and Barbara Bain was touted as the new *Star Trek* when the show premiered in September 1975, but poor scripts and bad timeslots kept the show in ratings trouble. The format was overhauled for the second season adding Catherine Schell as a shape-changing alien but the ratings did not justify the increasing cost. The show has quietly faded away, except for a few scattered syndicated markets.



SUPER SPACE THEATER © ITC Entertainment

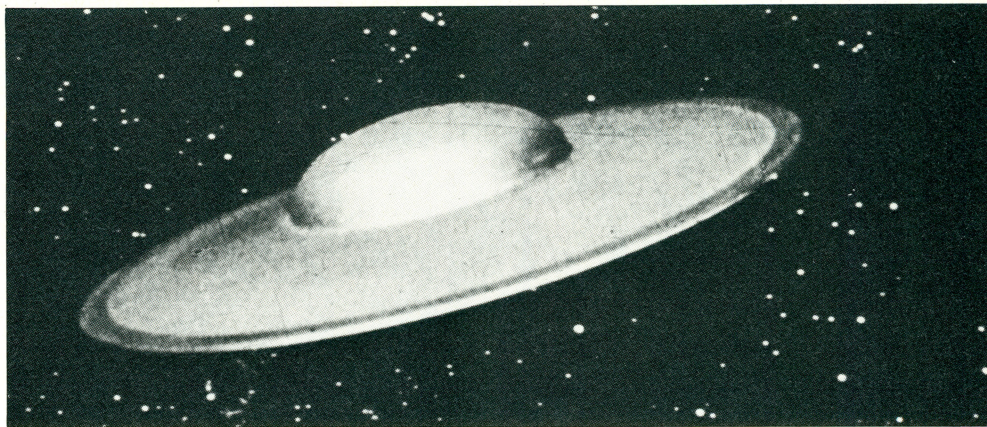
SST will also have some non-Anderson shows including *The Champions*, a show that was in limited syndication a decade ago.

To help update these shows for today's market, new titles and music were included along with computer generated opticals. *Captain Scarlet's* guns, for example, shoot lasers rather than bullets today. It is believed by ITC that children are more likely to believe the lasers will not kill a man and therefore the shows are defined as less violent and more apt to be approved by parents.

After cable sales have been finalized, ITC will try to market the package of films to independent stations. Some Canadian stations have already played the shows. One obstacle in their way is the fact that some of these shows, most often *Space: 1999*, are still licenced to stations in their original form and the market cannot use the package until the agreements end. For New York, that means the package will not run in its entirety until 1985.

Science fiction shows have enjoyed long and profitable lives in syndication. *Star Trek* is of course *the worldwide champion* and is followed by shows like *The Six Million Dollar Man*, *Wonder Woman*, *The Outer Limits*, and *The Twilight Zone*. *Battlestar Galactica* tried to edit its shows into 12 telefilms for the syndication market but more often than not, they are turning up on independent stations in their original hour-long format.

New to the syndication front is a package of shows with the umbrella title, *Force Five*. Jim Terry and Greg Kirkelie have totally re-edited, rewritten, and dubbed the best of five different Japanese animated programs. These shows involve children and their gargantuan



FORBIDDEN PLANET®MGM, 1956

Todd Rundgren has been extensively testing formats open to him with computer illustration and blue screen effects for his video adaptation of Holst's THE PLANETS using different images for each section of the piece.

robots fighting aliens and crime in space and on Earth. With 130 shows in the package, it is a very tempting product for independent stations around the country. It was purchased in Boston sight unseen and is being test-marketed in the Vermont area. Terry and Kirkelie have long-range plans for the *Force Five* concept including lucrative merchandising deals with manufacturers of toys, games, models and the usual collection of odds and ends. There is even talk of a live-action multi-million dollar Hollywood-produced film using the *Force Five* concepts.

Another British program that has been brought over to America has been *Doctor Who*. The show, one of the longest-running in England, has only been playing in America for a couple of years. And while Britons have been entertained by four actors as the time and space traveling Doctor, Americans are only familiar with two. The Tom Baker episodes of *Doctor Who* have been sold by Time-Life Television to both independent and public television stations according to Peter Hansen, Time-Life's director of programming.

"There has been a mixed reaction to it," he says. "It does have a cult following. Most of the independent stations show it on a strip basis but a number played it on a once-a-week



STAR TREK—THE MOTION PICTURE
©Paramount, 1979

basis, which I do not feel is the way to introduce the show." *Doctor Who* is made in serial form with four episodes per serial and several serials per season.

Hansen did say that some of the stations have edited the episodes into telefilms. Just recently, Time-Life brought over an additional 74

episodes of the show.

With Baker leaving the show this year, Hansen says Time-Life will wait until there are enough episodes with the new Doctor, Peter Davison, before thinking about bringing them to America.

As for the earlier episodes, Hansen says there are no present plans to bring those episodes over. Time-Life's contract with the BBC, producers of *Doctor Who*, expires next year.

Time-Life has also tried selling another British show, *Blake's 7* to American stations. There has been little interest in the show, involving political refugees who use advanced alien technology to combat a corrupt federation that is ruthlessly ruling the planets.

Public Broadcasting tried science fiction in early 1980 when they aired an adaptation of Ursula K. LeGuin's *The Lathe of Heaven*. The show, produced by New York's WNET, gained a good sized audience and great reviews but plans for a series of science fiction adaptations have seemingly been shelved because of the severe financial problems threatening public television.

And the networks themselves do not seem all that interested in trying to produce quality science fiction. The revamped *Buck Rogers* is in ratings trouble again and has had its new producer walk off after only one season. The show was given John Mantley, new cast members, and new settings, but all it has achieved so far is the wrath of fans claiming the show *may* have improved but, if so, because it ripped off *Star Trek*.

It would be impossible to discuss science fiction on television without mention of the role *Star Trek* has

played. Besides being a quality show that often defied the restrictions of television in the 1960s, it renewed many people's interest in space. Coupled with the Apollo missions, the show gave Americans a weekly chance to let their minds drift into the cosmos.

Ever since it began running on independent stations, the show has never been gone. In 1977, Paramount was seriously considering launching an independent "fourth network." They purchased the old Hughes Sports Network and reactivated *Star Trek* to be the flagship show for the four-hour, once-a-week network. The rest of the time would be filled with innovative movies and specials. While researching the concept, Paramount found a distinct lack of interest on the part of advertisers and the idea fell apart.

The \$42 million film has grossed over \$170 million worldwide and now there is talk that *Star Trek* will be produced as a monthly two-hour offering for television.

Harve Bennet, who made a name for himself when he worked on *The Six Million Dollar Man*, has been named executive producer. Paramount honored its contract with creator Roddenberry by offering him the job first but it came without any creative control and Roddenberry turned it down. He did, however, take a post as a script and character consultant. Both Roddenberry and Bennet agree that the time has come to introduce new characters aboard the U.S.S. Enterprise. These new characters would be a younger, new generation.

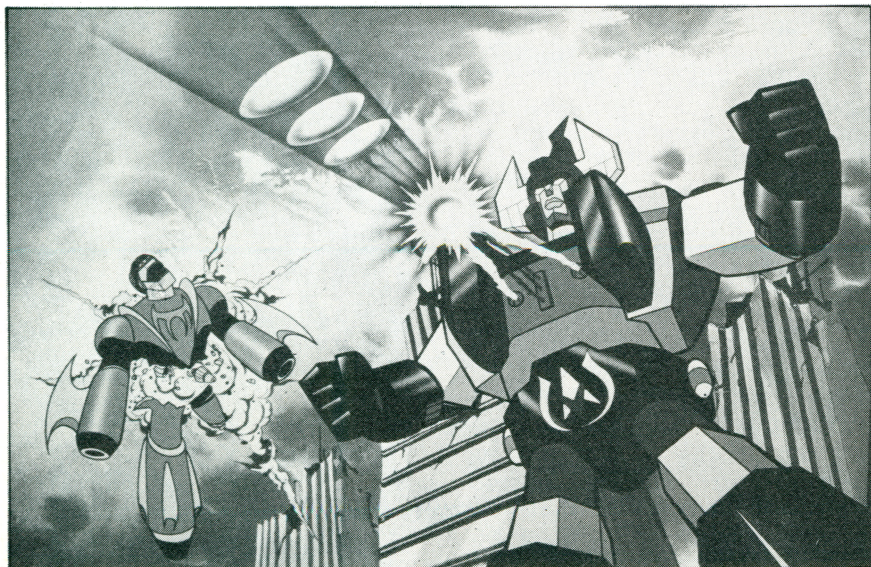
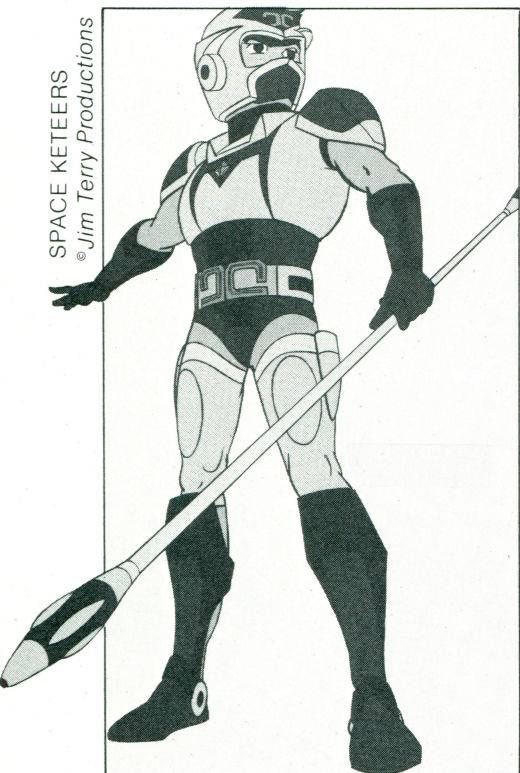
William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy have both agreed to reprise their internationally famous roles. Other cast members are being spoken to and production is slated to begin over the summer.

So there seems to be a lot of activity running around the television world. Rumors come from Hollywood that Avco Embassy is trying to interest the networks in a series based on the year's first movie hit, *Scanners*. And all the studios have at least one major science fiction project under development so the cable and home video markets should be at least minimally supplied for the foreseeable future.

Until the time is ripe for original production to begin for cable or even home video, the viewer will have to be content to relive the thrills of take-offs or the shock of finding still living aliens on a world long thought dead. But maybe that's enough ... for now.

Children are likely to believe lasers will not kill; therefore the shows are deemed less violent.

SPACE KETEERS
© Jim Terry Productions



FORCE FIVE © Jim Terry Productions

Prima FACIE

A FIRST VIEW OF WHAT'S NEW

VIDEO TAPES

NINE TO FIVE. An IPC Films Production of a Colin Higgins Picture, video cassette from Magnetic Video. Produced by Bruce Gilbert. Directed by Colin Higgins. Screenplay: Higgins and Patricia Resnick, story by Resnick. MPAA Rating: PG. Running time: 110 minutes. \$59.95 suggested retail.

Cast

Judy Bernly Jane Fonda
Violet Newstead Lily Tomlin
Doralee Rhodes Dolly Parton
Franklin Hart, Jr. ... Dabney Coleman
Roz Keith Elizabeth Wilson
Mr. Tinsworthy Sterling Hayden
Mr. Hinkle Henry Jones
Dick Bernly Lawrence Pressman
Cissie Hart Marian Mercer

Remember those so-called "adult" comedies of the late 1950s and 1960s? Those were the ones that invariably starred Rock Hudson as the misunderstood husband or fiancé who is caught in his pajamas and robe in the bedroom of Paula Prentiss by the quick-tempered Doris Day. Of course, Rock was always innocent (although Paula Prentiss usually had something naughty on her mind) and the comedy of errors eventually was resolved, leaving Rock and Doris to walk happily reunited into the sunset under the final credits.

I always hated those movies.

That is why, I must confess, I sat down to view the Magnetic Video Corporation release of the 1980 *Nine to Five* fully prepared to loathe it. From all I had heard and read of the film it sounded disgustingly close to those bygone sexual farces: those convoluted, totally ridiculous stories that hinged exclusively on the stupidity of the characters. But, I must also confess, all I had heard and read fooled me: *Nine to Five* is a damn good movie.

The fact that I liked the film was only the first surprise. The fact that Dolly Parton—in her first acting role—came across as an exciting and talented



actress was surprise number two. I had never thought of her as anything more than a *zaftig* country and western singer; with *Nine to Five* we find that she is more than a bust and a voice. Her talents as a singer are not wasted—Ms. Parton wrote and sang the film's snappy, Academy Award nominated title song.

The rest of the cast is equally good, from co-stars Lily Tomlin and Jane Fonda right down to the bit players with a few, albeit funny lines. It is quite obvious that they are all having fun with this fast-paced and funny script, enjoying every silly minute of it.

A good script is one thing that should not come as a surprise. Colin Higgins, *Nine to Five's* co-scripter and director, is the man responsible for one of the strangest, heartwarming, and funniest films to come along in many a decade, the 1971 Ruth Gordon/Bud Cort vehicle, *Harold and Maude*. Mr. Higgins has not lost his comedic touch.

Nor has he forgotten how to take what is basically a simple story and bring it to life on the screen. Fonda, Tomlin, and Parton play a trio of working girls at Consolidated Companies Incorporated under the charge of Franklin Hart, Jr., company executive and a "sexist, egotistical, lying, hypocritical bigot" to boot. Hart (Dabney Coleman) goes through the first half of the film treating his female employees like dirt, good only for fetching coffee, taking verbal abuse, and chasing around the desk. Doralee Rhodes (Parton) is his executive secre-

The fantasy sequences are some of the more bizarre moments in NINE TO FIVE. Strange? Yes. Funny? Most definitely.

tary who, happily married and morally offended by Hart's porkishness, fends off his advances to little avail: she does not put out for him but he is not above telling everyone that she does. As a result, Doralee is a social pariah as far as the rest of the office is concerned.

Things pick up when the three stars finally join together after a collective argument with the boss. Taking the day off, they head over to Doralee's place to get high off the joint supplied them by Violet Newstead's (Tomlin) teenage son. What follows is some of the funniest stuff in the film. The gathering starts off with the three women getting the terminal giggles from the pot, moves smoothly into their respective fantasies about how they would like to kill the boss, and ends with them pigging out over a table-load of food with a fierce case of the munchies.

The fantasy sequences are some of the more bizarre bits in the film. Judy Bernly (Fonda) conjures up the image of a hunt for the offending Hart in the company offices, complete with torch-wielding employees lead by howling bloodhounds; Doralee imagines her role reversed with Hart, ultimately roping, tying, and roasting him over an open fire; and Violet envisions herself as Snow White, sweetly poisoning Hart's coffee with the aid of a host of Disney-esque animated animals and birds. Strange? Yes. Funny? Most definitely.

It is around this point that *Nine to Five* moves into the madcap mode

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and keeps on moving. Violet accidentally puts rat poison into Hart's coffee. But, before he can drink the tainted brew, he falls from his defective swivel chair and knocks himself unconscious. Violet discovers her error and is convinced that she has poisoned the now-unconscious boss, just like in her fantasy of the night before. Along with Doralee and Judy, she awaits word on his condition at the hospital.

Guess what happens next? Yep. Hart, who received only a bump on the head, comes to and leaves, just as another man dies from—you got it!—poison. Figuring she cannot be convicted without proof of the dirty deed, Violet steals the momentarily unattended body. The mistake is soon discovered. When Hart shows up the next morning alive and well, all three are understandably upset and wind up, due to more errors and strange boo-boos, kidnapping Hart and restraining him at his home in a most imaginative manner until they can out-blackmail him.

Nine to Five has all the elements of those earlier comedies-of-errors (minus the purile sexual innuendos) but here they work. Every working stiff knows and identifies with the idea of the pain-in-the-ass boss. Not many of us get caught with Paula Prentiss. So what if the ultimate outcome of the film is predictable from the start? Even if we are not surprised by what happens, we are entertained by it.

Still, beneath the comedy is a serious issue: sexual harassment of working women. But this is comedy, so Higgins et al content themselves with simply making us aware of the problem. At no time are we preached to, nor does the film's tone change to hit us over the head with it.

Technically, *Nine to Five* works just as well. The writing is sharp, the direction crisp, the editing fast-paced, never letting the fun and action lag.

The tape, released three months after the film's theatrical debut, is an instant hit: it shipped gold.

The quality of the Magnetic Video tape is up to standard. This particular cassette had one or two minor glitches from the copyguarding, but—along with the excellent sound—certainly nothing to complain about.

As a matter of fact, I can think of nothing in *Nine to Five* that is worth complaining about. Against all my worst expectations going in, I had a thoroughly good time.

—Paul Kupperberg

AIRPLANE. A Paramount movie from Paramount Home Video. Produced by John Davison. Executive producers, directors, and writers: Jim Abrahams,

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CATALOG



David Zucker, Jerry Zucker. MPA Rating: PG. Running time: 88 minutes. \$79.95 suggested retail.

Cast

Ted Striker Robert Hayes
Elaine Julie Hagerty
Murdock Kareem Abdul-Jabbar
Dr. Rumack Leslie Neilson
Capt. Oveur Peter Graves
Kramer Robert Stack
Randy Lorna Patterson
McCroskey Lloyd Bridges
Johnny Steven Stucker
Otto Himself

In the early 1950s, E.C. Publications, a comic book company known primarily for its horror and science fiction titles, created a book that would become the most successful and most imitated comic of all: *Mad*!

Mad was the brainchild of writer/editor Harvey Kurtzman and publisher William M. Gaines. Kurtzman's bizarre and unique outlook on life allowed him to lampoon, satirize, and often devastate almost any subject upon which he focused his attentions. Because Kurtzman was also an excellent artist, he gave his artists their scripts in the form of page breakdowns; each panel actually drawn out in rough art.

Because his artists must have become somewhat frustrated following another artist's layouts rather than drawing their own, they resorted to creating visual havoc in the backgrounds of all the comic panels. The artists would create their own sight gags, funny posters, jokes, and even characters who would pop in and out. Therefore, in reading *Mad*, you had two levels of humor—Kurtzman's front level—the story which was always hilariously conceived, and the artist's, manic drawings of wildly insane things. Together, these two levels produced some of the funniest humor material ever to appear in comic books.

After 23 issues, *Mad* comics became *Mad Magazine*, staffs changed, and

today's *Mad* continues to be published bearing virtually no similarity to its earlier, and some feel funnier, origins.

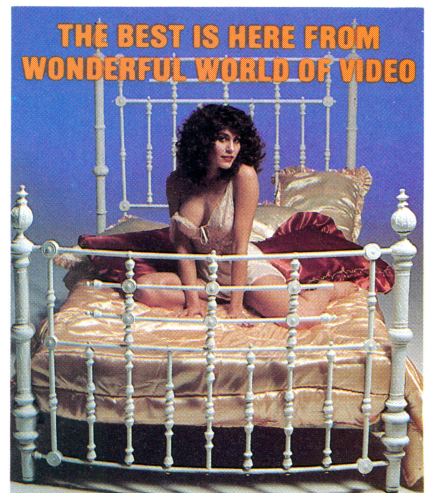
In 1980, a movie was released called *Mad Magazine Presents: Up The Academy*. *Mad* had nothing to do with this movie outside of accidentally lending its name to a previously written film. A framing device utilizing Alfred E. Neuman, *Mad*'s mongoloid mascot, was supposed to tie this film in with the magazine, but no one was fooled. The movie was awful, and quickly bombed.

However, also in 1980, there was a film that definitely could have been created by *Mad*... or at least the old *Mad* comics, and that was *Airplane!*

Airplane! is the closest approximation to an old *Mad* comic that has been filmed. And, following the comic, there are levels of humor. We have the constant foreground story telling jokes—jokes which never seem to end. We also have background sight gags galore. In the old *Mad* comics, when microphones are stuck in someone's face, amongst the mikes would be cannons, peppermint sticks, and more. In *Airplane!* we have microphones and ice cream cones simulating the mikes. We have computers mixed in with washing machines, a gag that is hilarious if you catch it, but won't cause you to lose the plot if you miss it. There are as many gags hidden in the background of this movie as in the foreground, and when you see them, they only add to the wild frenzy *Airplane!*'s writers have given us.

The plot is simple, and it is even a lampoon of a previous airplane disaster movie. The food served aboard the airplane is contaminated, and the pilots and most of the passengers become ill. The plane must be landed by one of its passengers, an ex-war pilot named Ted Striker (played by Robert Hayes, of TV's *Angie* fame). However, because a wartime decision Striker had made years ago caused the deaths of his fellow pilots, he refuses to take the controls.

It would be impossible and ludicrous to summarize the events aboard this stricken plane; they have to be seen. And that, if anything, is the only weakness this video tape has. Few people really "watch" television. We fidget, walk around the room, talk to each other, and only occasionally look at the screen. In his PBS special on television comedy shows, producer/writer Garry Marshall (*Happy Days*, *Laverne and Shirley*, *Mork and Mindy*) said you have to expect the viewers not to pay strict attention. This, I feel, is what has led TV into becoming talking heads, reduced mostly to verbal gags that require only ear



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attention rather than any *real* attention.

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Technical aspects of this tape are all fine. There is no copyguard roll, the sound is crisp, and very little is cropped off the screen.

The movie is highly recommended, and unlike most comedies that are boring the second or third time you watch them, *Airplane!* becomes funnier because you continue to pick up those little background gags.

Now, if only *Mad* had produced this movie. . .

—Marv Wolfman

ANDY WARHOL'S FRANKENSTEIN. A Carlo Ponti-Braunsberg-Rassam production, video cassette from Video Gems. Written and directed by Paul Morrissey. MPAA Rating: X. Running time: 95 minutes. \$59.95 suggested retail.

Cast

Field Hand Joe Dallesandro
Baron von Frankenstein . . . Udo Kier
Baroness Von Frankenstein
 Monique Van Vooren
Otto Arno Juerging

ANDY WARHOL'S DRACULA. A Carlo Ponti-Braunsberg-Rassam production, video cassette from Video Gems. Written and directed by Paul Morrissey. MPAA Rating: X. Running time: 106 minutes. \$59.95 suggested retail.

Cast

Field Hand Joe Dallesandro
Count Dracula Udo Kier
Anton Arno Juerging
Lord de Fiore Vittorio de Sica
Local Peasant Roman Polanski

In this version of *Frankenstein*, the baron lives in Serbia and is married to his sister; they have two quietly sinister children; there are two monsters, a male and a female; and the faithful assistant's name is *not* Igor. Baron von Frankenstein is obsessed with the idea of creating a race of *zombies* that will obey his every command, and he builds two creatures from spare parts to play Adam and Eve to his God.

The female zombie is complete, but the male lacks a head. The Baron has two criteria for the missing part: it must have the perfect Serbian *nasum* (nose), and it must have "overriding

sensual urges" so that it will mate with the female creature. To obtain a head that will fit the bill, the Baron and his assistant Otto journey to the local bordello where they lie in wait outside for their unsuspecting victim.

Eventually, a head with the perfect nose emerges from the house of ill repute, and the Baron and Otto disengage the head from its body with a pair of giant scissors and then repair back to the laboratory. But, alas! The

nose is correct but the urges are not. Baron von Frankenstein has snatched the head of a young man with aspirations to join the priesthood.

To complicate matters, the Baroness takes a liking to a local shepherd (Joe Dallesandro) and brings him home to be her lover/butler. Unfortunately, the hapless, headless youth was Joe's best friend, and bloody pandemonium erupts after Joe and the creature with his old chum's head meet in the dining room.

This may not be exactly what Mary Shelley had in mind, but then *Dracula* hardly resembles Bram Stoker's original either.

Paul Morrissey adds a new twist to the vampire theme: the count cannot drink just *any* blood; he must have the blood of a virgin. To offset this new handicap, several old inconveniences are removed. *This Count Dracula* is no more affected by the light of day than a common heroin addict, and crosses only upset him mildly.

Anton, Dracula's faithful manservant, informs the count that there are no more virgins left in the ancestral home of Romania and suggests that they look for fresh pickings in Italy. Why Italy? Because, Anton explains, the Italians will be impressed by the Count's title, and *all* those unmarried Catholic girls are virgins. Dracula is too weak to refute Anton's logic. So they strap the coffin on top of the car and head south.

In Italy they find a once wealthy family named de Fiore with four seemingly eligible daughters. The father and mother are more than willing to marry off one of their daughters to the peaked, foreign count. Dracula is wealthy, and the de Fiore's need an infusion of capital as much as Dracula needs virgin blood.

But things are not as they appear. Two of the young ladies have been

fooling around with the field hand (Joe Dallesandro again), as well as each other, and the plot rapidly congeals. The luckless count picks the experienced daughters as his first two victims and discovers the hard way that they are not virgins—he becomes violently ill, vomiting blood like a high school kid pukes beer, when he drinks nonvirgin blood. From then on it is a race to see who will get the two real virgins first—Joe or Dracula.

Warhol's FRANKENSTEIN may not be exactly what Mary Shelley had in mind, but then DRACULA hardly resembles Bram Stoker's original either.

Both of these films, made in 1974, are primarily the handiwork of Paul Morrissey, who gained notoriety by directing such Warhol hits as *Trash* and *Heat*. Aside from the presence of Morrissey and Dallesandro, the only evidence of Warhol in these films is his name. He neither produced, wrote, nor directed them.

The two films are remarkably similar in several respects. The same actors appear in both, playing similar parts. Udo Kier portrays Frankenstein and Dracula, with Arno Juerging as the trusty sidekicks Otto and Anton. And Joe Dallesandro plays the common working man/hero (?) who brings about the downfall of both villains. There is plenty of gore in both films, with hokey dismemberments and Monty Pythonesque blood spurting all over everything, and both are X-rated because of occasional full frontal nudity and pseudo-sex scenes. Lastly, almost everyone speaks with non-descript, changing European accents (The Count and Anton cannot decide whether to say "wirgin" or "virgin"), except for Joe who looks and sounds like a misplaced Brooklyn greaser.

In short, if you've seen one, you've seen 'em both.

This is not to say they are merely bad. They are *intentionally* bad, which is a different thing entirely. Morrissey plainly does not take the subject matter seriously, and he has managed to produce a fairly good parody of both classic and modern horror films.

The blood and guts will probably upset some, but it is done in a manner that is mostly humorous. After the monster chops off Frankenstein's hand, the Baron futilely tries to stick it back on and then throws it at Joe in frustration. The *zombie* then impales the Baron with a spear, and Frankenstein proceeds to give a two minute self-eulogy while his pierced heart

dangles on the shaft.

The dialogue is tongue-in-cheek throughout. Baron von Frankenstein exclaims, "To know death, Otto, you have to fuck life in the gall bladder!" And after helping Anton lug Dracula's coffin up to his bedroom, Joe opines, "There's something slimy about that count."

Even the soundtracks of the two films alert the viewer that this is not to be taken seriously. Rather than music designed to heighten the audience's fear and apprehension, the soundtrack of *Dracula* is a combination of 1930s jazz and dance band music, interspersed with something reminiscent of *Spunky* and *Tadpole* cartoons.

Perhaps seeing these films on the relatively small television screen makes them appear sillier than they were intended to be. The excessive gore might overwhelm you on a 70mm screen, but it looks downright funny on the television set.

Frankenstein and *Dracula* are both entertaining at times (if you do not have delicate sensibilities), but each is about 40 minutes too long. Some judicious editing might have made these films cult comedy/horror classics. Of course, this would leave two one-hour movies, but there really isn't a whole lot going on anyway. And how

much of this kind of abuse are you willing to sit through?

—Rick Oliver

VIDEODISCS

WORLD AT WAR: MORNING, JUNE-AUGUST 1944. A Thames Color Production release from MCA DiscoVision. Jeremy Issacs, series producer. Produced and directed by John Pett. Written by John Williams. Narrated by Laurence Olivier. Color and black and white. Running time: 47 minutes. \$9.95 suggested retail. Full special effects capability.

The conflict in Vietnam may have been the first time war was brought into our living rooms via the magic of television, but World War II emerges in this dubious contest as the first fully documented war of our time. Both the Allied and Axis forces kept extensive filmed records of their achievements on the battlefield and off, capturing for all time in astonishing detail the history of this global conflagration.

Such complete record keeping has proved quite a boon to World War II buffs—myself included. Over the past several years, I have had numerous occasions to research one aspect or another of the war following the war

to end all wars. Each foray into books on the subject or back issues of *Time* have lead to new discoveries or areas of interest, and considering the scope of the war, I doubt anyone can truly absorb it all in a single lifetime.

But we can certainly try—and the old saw about those not knowing the past being doomed to repeat it has rarely meant more than it does now concerning the events of WW II. However, television has done its part to help us with such syndicated programs as *Victory At Sea*, *The Commanders*, and *World At War*. These broadcasts drew heavily from WW II film archives the world over to give their audiences a rare glimpse of the war from all sides.

The best of this well done lot, in my opinion, was the 1974 British-made series, *World At War*. The hour long episodes (including commercials) traced the war from its beginnings in Germany in the 1920s to the post-atomic bomb era of Japan using rare, previously unseen footage of battles and behind-the-lines planning and preparations. This is mixed with contemporary color interviews with the men and women who made it happen. To say that the series told us everything we wanted to know about WW II is ridiculous, but it did cover a fair

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Beta 2: \$49.95

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538 • DIARY OF A NYMPH COLOR This girl has a problem—she simply can't get enough... of anything! Boys, girls, next door neighbors, herself... it really doesn't matter as long as it's sex! With several fine Lesbian scenes, double couples, Peeping Toms, voyeurism and one-on-one. 1hr.

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624 • GIRL IN A PENTHOUSE COLOR. With HARRY REEMS. The story of Linda, a girl who has everything she want's! Ultra-soft, sophisticated, New York style sex. 60 minutes.

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amount of ground and provide an excellent jump-off point for those who wished to dig deeper on their own.

DiscoVision's laser optical videodisc presentation of *World At War*, *Morning* covers the waning days of the Second World War, specifically the plans for—and the actual mounting of—the Allied invasion of Normandy on D-Day and the subsequent push into occupied Europe. D-Day was perhaps the largest single invasion plan ever devised by mankind, involving on the Allied side alone the commitment of 150,000 troops, 6500 naval vessels, hundreds of aircraft, thousands of glider plane troops, and untold tons of munitions. Going in, the Allied generals expected seven out of every 10 men would die to take the beaches along Normandy—they were not far off in their expectations.

The story of D-Day and the invasion of Nazi occupied Europe—which came under the collective codename "Overlord"—is a fascinating one. The human condition aside, it was a massive undertaking, requiring years of planning, deception, and technological development. How do you get 130,000 men to a drop off point without the Germans uncovering the plans? How do you land them safely, and en masse, on the heavily defended beaches of Normandy? How to wrest control of Europe from Axis control? These were some of the questions the commanders had to face—and *World At War* shows them talking about how they arrived at the answers.

The late Lord Louis Mountbatten, chief of combined operations from 1941-1943, is interviewed, as are Kay Summersby, General Eisenhower's military driver, Dr. J.M. Stagg, chief meteorologist for the Allied invasion, and Major General J. Lawton Collins, chief of the U.S. VII Corps. Their words—presented in contemporary color footage—take us back through those fateful days step by step, underscoring the black and white films of actual battle, narrated by the golden voice of Sir Laurence Olivier.

The battle scenes themselves are horribly fascinating. Soldiers recoiling from enemy bullets . . . slow pans of Normandy covered end to end with burnt or mutilated bodies . . . soldiers who never made it ashore bobbing in the surf beyond the beach. And, in one of the disc's more poignant moments, a survivor of the invasion recalls watching one of the landing crafts being destroyed by enemy shells and his comrades killed, remembering how "the sea was quite a crimson color" when the assault craft

blew up.

World At War is a good videodisc, but it is by no means *entertainment*. The picture quality is excellent and despite a slight hiss, the sound is good. Naturally, the 30-year-old black and white war footage is somewhat worn, but it holds up well on disc.

WORLD AT WAR is a good videodisc, but it is by no means entertainment.

A recurring theme in videodisc reviews has been the amount of fun one can have with the special effects features on the machine: you can take apart scenes, move them backwards or forwards as slow or as fast as you desire, and freeze them for closer study. You can do this with the *World At War* videodisc, but you probably would not want to. There is something entirely too ghoulish in sitting there and watching men die by the thousands in graphic slow motion instant replay.

Still, *World At War* is good television: it does what more programs should do, and that is to inform and educate us. After viewing the apocalypse, it is doubtful anyone will want to see it in person. A world at war is a devastating sight, and *World At War* confirms all the more our belief that this is one phase of history that we should not repeat.

—Paul Kupperberg

GAMES

COSMIC CONFLICT!, ALIEN INVADERS—PLUS!, and LAS VEGAS BLACKJACK: video games from Magnavox for the Odyssey² game unit. \$19.95 each, suggested retail.

Perhaps this review should be subtitled "How I Broke the Atari Habit and Came To Love My Odyssey²." The Magnavox Odyssey² game unit's main selling point, I believe, is its joystick, which is probably the easiest to maneuver of all the control units for home video games—particularly compared to the one found on the Atari units. I cannot emphasize enough how important this difference is. With the Atari unit's control stick my hand begins to cramp after only a half hour or so. This has become such a chronic condition that I have come to call it *Atari crampitis*.

Over some of the next several issues we will be reviewing some of the many cartridges available for Odyssey² from Magnavox.

Cosmic Conflict!



This deceptively simple game is not so simple upon initial play. Intended for the solitary player, *Cosmic Conflict* requires a high degree of dexterity and hand-to-eye coordination.

The player is in command of the star fighter Centurion, which consists of the room you are in and the "laser starburster" sighting instrumentation which appears at the center of your television screen. The object of the game is to blow the bejesus out of 15 alien spacecraft (transports, battle frigates, and star fighters). These vehicles will appear on your screen coming from different areas and at several different trajectories.

Two numbers appear at the bottom of the screen. To the left is the number of aliens which remain to be destroyed before the Milky Way is saved from the enemy's nefarious nonhuman presense; this number begins at 15 and decreases as your shooting luck improves. The right hand number represents the quantum of energy units in your fuel receptors. Beginning with 1000 "megajules," it decreases one unit per second, by 10 every time you fire your laser, and by 50 when you take a direct hit from the aliens. The object of the game is to eliminate the 15 alien spacecraft before your energy units are exhausted, which is no mean feat at first.

Cosmic Conflict seems to be the best of the Magnavox games for introducing the user to the vagaries of the Odyssey² joystick since it requires movement all around the playing field (a 360° area). The game also requires a good aim for sighting and locking onto the enemy, who will disintegrate into a multi-colored nothingness with a loud blast when a direct hit is registered.

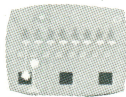
At different intervals within each set, an enemy Imperial star fighter flashes into your range with a general "alert" flashing off-and-on at the bottom of the screen accompanied by a sound reminiscent of European police cars. An enemy star fighter will pop up almost anywhere on the screen and may come at you from a variety of directions at different times during the game. When you are confronted with this situation, you have to outmaneuver the ship before you can lock it into your sights; you have only a few seconds to do this before it gets close enough to fire at you. One advantage the enemy star fighter has over you is that it never misses, so the idea is to get your shots off before it can fire.

While the star fighter is stalking you, and you *it* you have only one recourse other than scoring a direct hit. You can run. But if you do you are likely to encounter another enemy star fighter waiting in the wings.

The five enemy star fighters protect 10 transports and battle frigates. You have to knock them all out or else you lose: the screen will go momentarily blank when your energy units are used, then one of two ominous messages will flash across the screen—"Message from Star Command . . . report immediately for court-martial" or "... you are retired in disgrace." On the other hand, if you are successful, Star Command will congratulate you ("Good shooting . . . galaxy saved again") or you will be promoted to commodore. Great fun.

It took me several hours of play to master *Cosmic Conflict*. Since doing so I have yet to lose a game to the computer, so the fun has gone out. This points to one advantage the Atari games have over most of the Odyssey² games: the Atari unit includes a difficulty switch and in many cases, more difficult versions on the cartridge. Odyssey² has no such mechanism and only several of their games have *more* than one difficulty program. *Cosmic Conflict* would be greatly enhanced with either feature.

Two recent 10-year-old visitors to my home were captivated for hours by the game. My impression is that for older people, the game's lure will dissipate in inverse ratio to the degree of expertise he or she gains, while kids will play it even more once they master its ins-and-outs. And as such, the *least* that can be said for *Cosmic Conflict* is that it is one hell of a good babysitter.



Alien Invaders!

While we are on the subject of aliens: Maganovox has its own version of the now-famous *Space Invaders*, called *Alien Invaders—Plus!* (note: all the Odyssey² games incorporate an exclamation point, even the relatively unexciting *Computer Intro!*). The "Plus" in the title refers to the fact that it incorporates several features of its own to differentiate it from the old reliable quarter-guzzler we have all come to love.

As soon as you turn on the game you are confronted with eight attack robots, each with a laser cannon and each protected by a shield wall. The robots are commanded by the "Merciless Monstroth," which looks like a big bug that scuttles back and forth across the top of the screen.

Not only do the cannons fire at you but so does Merciless Monstroth. "You," in the context of the game, are a single robot defender inside a mobile laser cannon at the bottom of the screen. You move right or left, but not up or down, and are protected by three shields. Each shield contains an additional cannon.

If your cannon is hit by laser fire it disintegrates, leaving you a naked, unprotected robot scurrying about the bottom of the screen. When this happens—and it is not a pretty sight—your only recourse is to use your joystick to rush the robot underneath a shield. When you press the action button your robot will once again be inside a cannon, which was previously inside the shield, which now does not exist—so you have one less place of cover, since when you convert the shield into a cannon you lose the protection of that particular shield. If you use up all your shields, Merciless Monstroth will leave its berth at the top of the screen and begin chasing you all over the screen, firing until you are destroyed. Nope, not pretty at all.

While the game progresses you are attempting to knock out the enemy robots, their weaponry, and, of course, Big MM himself. Unfortunately, you can eliminate MM for only a few seconds at a time: it will reappear much too soon after you score a direct hit against it. Fortunately, once an enemy robot is hit it stays away for good.

Unfortunately, the enemy's shields are totally impervious to your weaponry.

You win the battle only when all the enemy robots are destroyed *and* when Big MM has been finally destroyed *after* all the robots are gone from the screen. You lose anytime your unprotected robot is directly hit. The first side to win 10 battles wins the game.

Alien Invaders—Plus! is the most difficult video game I have ever encountered—bar none, and that includes the larger and sometimes more sophisticated games one encounters in game rooms and saloons. I have been playing AIP for several weeks now, for a total of at least 20 hours or so and I have won only one full game against the computer.

Alien Invaders—Plus! gets this reviewer's unqualified nomination for the most captivating video game around.

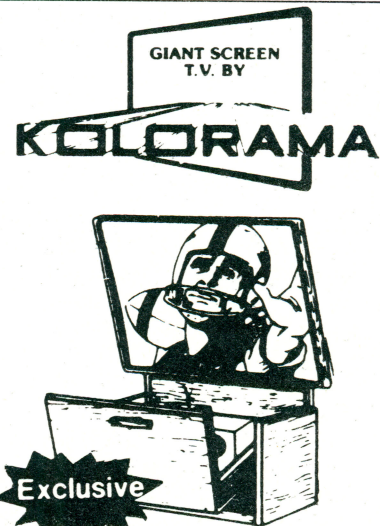
Las Vegas Blackjack!

Magnavox's *Blackjack* game is played entirely on the alpha-numeric keyboard—so you put away the joysticks. The game is for one or two players, who are given \$1,000 to bet. You can bet

anywhere from \$1 to \$9999 (if you have that much in your winnings); the computer, of course is the dealer.

For those who are unfamiliar with the game of Blackjack (also known as 21 in some circles): the object of the game is to get a higher count of cards than the dealer, up to but not over 21 points. If a player draws cards with a point value over 21, the player loses the hand and the pot. If the dealer's hand goes over 21, or if its point value is lower than the player's hand, the dealer pays. The only time a hand (which begins with two cards) with a lower point value will beat one of a higher value is when it is composed of five cards. A player, after being given the initial two cards per hand has the option of drawing more cards until he reaches or exceeds 21. An ace is worth either 1 or 11, picture cards are worth 10.

I was able to make an interesting comparison between Odyssey² *Las Vegas Blackjack!* and the real thing as it is played in casinos (and basements and alleys). One advantage to the video game player over the casino player is that the former, of course, does not require real money. However, the main problem I encountered with the video game is a certain lack of true randomness in the deal of the



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cards. Sure, the computer "shuffles" the cards but certain patterns emerge in the computer's favor that a real shuffle in a casino would eliminate: when the player in the video game is dealt an initially high point hand, say 18 to 20 the computer is able to match or exceed that point count just a bit too often if you ask me.

On the other hand, in the computer game, when dealer and player point counts match it is a tie. In casinos, the dealer wins a point match.

Despite the drawback of a certain amount of predictability in the video game, it is a good way to learn and hone Blackjack skills... particularly if you are planning a trip to Nevada or Atlantic City.

Even though the computer has a certain advantage over the player—as does the dealer in a casino—I have won several hundred thousand "dollars" at a sitting from the machine, a feat which I doubt I could duplicate in a casino.

—Alex Josephs

X-RATED

CHAMPAGNE FOR BREAKFAST (1980), Produced and directed by Chris Warfield. Screenplay by John Hayes. Running time: 90 minutes. Distributed by Select Video, Inc. \$89.95 suggested retail.

Cast

Champagne Leslie Bovee
Harry Davenport John Leslie
Cheree Andi Barbour
Peggie Bonnie Holiday
John Blair Harris
Gladys Whitmore Kay Parker
Eric Jen Scudder
Car Wash Girl Sharon Kane

Like the majority of contemporary porno, *Champagne For Breakfast* has the barest possible plot. In this extended scenario, Champagne (played by the lovely Leslie Bovee) is an advertising executive recently promoted to vice president. Harry Davenport (John Leslie) is an unemployed hunk looking for a macho job.

In the course of a job interview

Harry meets Cheree, the manager of a strip joint that needs a bouncer. Within minutes they seduce each other and retire to the lady's office, which consists essentially of a large circular bed with a fishtank headboard. They proceed to get into several minutes of extremely animated gettin'-down-to-business. Then, in a rather surprising move for a porno movie, Harry jumps out of bed in disgust when one of the strippers surreptitiously joins the pair. "You're just a couple of lesbians!" Harry screams as he leaves. This is the first time I've seen anybody in a porno movie turn down twofers. And probably the last time, I'll bet.

So Harry hoofs it back to the employment agency where, relating his repugnance of the previous interview to the pretty English receptionist, he is seduced for all of three minutes by the well-endowed lady (who seems to prefer quick triggers). Once the two speedsters have had their jollies a possible job opening for a bodyguard to a lady executive is mentioned. Unfortunately, two previous applicants from the agency have been turned down. Harry gets a flash of inspiration: obviously the lady is looking for a man with, shall we say, a sweeter disposition... so Harry swishes and lisps his way into—tada!—Champagne's office and gains employment.

Champagne, to celebrate her recent promotion, is going on two weeks' vacation during which time she will require the services of a bodyguard/chauffeur/masseur. So, for the next two weeks (or 90 minutes, whichever comes first) feigned-fey-Harry and hot-to-trot Champagne drive around California with the expressed purpose of taking the lady to various bars, a male whorehouse (a great three-on-one scene here), and even a construction site, where Champagne relieves her inner tensions caused by executive pressures.

The scenes during this part of the flick are very well done. Interesting sets and good photography abound and everyone appears to be having a wonderful time exploring each others' nooks, crannies, and protuberances. The actors seem quite inspired as they roll about naked, veins and eyeballs popping, mouths agape spouting obscenities, sweat pouring out of every... sorry, I get carried away sometimes.

Champagne, after having her advances rebuffed by an unliberated older gentleman in a bar, retires to the powder room where she encounters a Sweet Young Thing who uses one of the most inventive lines I've heard in a long time: "I'd like to eat the crotch

out of your panties!" I'll have to remember that one.

The scene shifts to another happening that goes against the grain of conventional porno. Champagne and the S.Y.T. are now in her room where the former is being sensuously stroked, smooched, and slurped by the latter. When the S.Y.T. attempts to receive tit for twat (or is it the other way around?) Champagne is unable to reciprocate. S.Y.T. is totally understanding. Again, a strange turn of events for a porno movie.

All the while Champagne is getting her cork popped, poor Harry is left in the lurch—until he happens across a lusty lady car wash attendant who hops into the car for another of Harry's classic three-minute relationships. The suds and giant brushes produce a romantic tattoo on the windows. When the male attendant tries to clean the car's interior he hops out screaming "You can clean that up yourself!"

Seemingly believing Harry's commitment to the Love That Dare Not Lisp Its Name, Champagne provides him with one of the hardy fellows from the male bordello gang-bang scene: a black guy named "Buck" (look, I did not write the screenplay). Harry panics after Champagne discreetly leaves and like a good heterosexual, he cold cocks poor Buck and splits himself.

In a series of developments too involved and boring to lay out, Harry inherits a few million dollars from a string of instant print shops, Champagne gives up her position with the advertising agency, they fall madly in love (Champagne says she knew all along that Harry was just pretending to be gay) and presumably fornicate happily ever after.

Champagne For Breakfast suffers only from a rather boring soundtrack which begins with a Pink Pantheresque quasi-jazz ambiance which quickly degenerates into something sounding like elevator muzak composed by Henry Mancini with a hangover. Except for two quick rock'n'roll numbers which accompany Harry's equally quick tete-a-tetes, the music is absolutely listless.

But *Champagne For Breakfast* is anything but boring. Its 90 minutes is filled with enough action, humor, and interesting settings that it turns out to be fun. John Leslie, one of the few people in porn who can act, helps to set this film apart from the run-of-the-mill cheesy loops which abound on the market these days.

Purchasers and renters, I believe, will not feel ripped off.

—T.B. Martin

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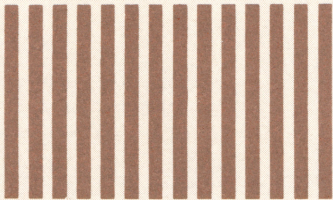
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